Fiction and the Historical Frame

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Abstract

This thesis makes the case for the existence of the 'historical frame', defined here as an (in)tangible border around historical materials that shapes their reception. By looking at a case study of historical novels and plays set in the late Roman Empire, it argues for the use of the historical frame as an analytical tool to better understand the complex framing processes in works defined as both 'historical' and 'fictional'. The aim, by looking at the historical frame in fiction, is to offer a new perspective on the development of popular impressions of antiquity by considering how these impressions are stamped, approved, transmitted, appreciated, and inherited.

The historical frame is divided here into five interrelated aspects, namely the material, spatial, cultural, cognitive, and imaginative. These aspects are further grouped into two sides or categories that model the reading experience of historical fiction. The public-facing side of the historical frame is what the reader sees, and is produced by the author and publisher. It is made up of the material, spatial, and cultural aspects, which take the form of paratexts, genre, and ideas of history and fiction. The non-public-facing side consists of the reader's cognitive and imaginative input as they negotiate the public-facing side. Building on theories of framing, paratextuality, reader-response and classical reception, the chapters that follow explore the interface between the two sides of the historical frame. In particular, they consider how this interface triangulates the reception of antiquity by connecting the reader to the past as it can be known and its representation. By investigating the theoretical underpinnings, construction, and dialogical workings of the historical frame, this thesis offers valuable insights into how it embeds not only the historical content of antiquity in the historical imagination, but also various conceptual ways to understand this.

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To acknowledge someone in a work of literature involves recognising their importance and especially their help in shaping the final product; it is a way of expressing gratitude and a sense of indebtedness. What you see here would not be possible without those mentioned below. The culmination of this doctorate, after four years of intensive work, along with the writing of these acknowledgements, is very much like the moment before a wedding, when all those who matter have gathered to witness the birth of something new, a future yet to be made. In looking back, I realise what led me here. The second meaning of 'acknowledge', therefore, is also in effect, the idea of accepting the truth of something, of confessing what my support network – formed of family, friends, and colleagues – has meant to me, and how it shaped what you see here.

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For Melissa

Author’s declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

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Chapter 1

Theorising the Frame

§1 Introduction: Fiction and the Historical Frame

"When you put a frame around things, you intensify them. Experience without that frame is banal."[1]
– *Cinemania*

Definitions

Whether consumers are told that what they are about to experience is based on a true story, inspired by historical events, or that it is a biography, narrative history, historical drama, counterfactual history, or academic scholarship on a particular historical topic, the first point of contact is typically with what I formulate as the 'historical frame'.[2] It is my contention that whatever strain of history is presented, the historical frame expresses the existence of an (in)tangible border around such material that shapes the reception of that material. Inspired by the work of framing theories, paratextual theorists, and classical reception scholars, this thesis will make the case for the existence of the historical frame, and in particular its use as an analytical tool in studying the impact of historical fiction set in Rome on public (mostly Western) conceptions of history.[3]

Let us start with a general definition of the historical frame. The historical frame is a verbal, visual, cognitive, imaginative, discursive, and materially liminal framework created and sustained by those involved in the production of history – especially its manifestation and conveyance in the present – and negotiated and relied on by all consumers of historical artefacts, representations, and derivatives. The public-facing side of the historical frame, I argue, takes the form of titles, prefaces, and interviews, as well as genre, commercial branding, and the placing of artefacts in thematically curated rooms. As I see it, the primary purpose of these devices is to mark historical material as different from other types of human production, usually with the caveat that it pertains to a form of historical truth (what really happened/what were the causes) or that it is as true to the past as any representation or reconstruction can be. Invested with agency by its producers, the historical frame intervenes in and constantly shapes the development of historical understanding, enabling it to exert authority over the reception of historical material.

The historical frame, in addition to the above, also suggests a process for the author and reader, as my thesis will show. This is a process of orientation and discovery in relation to the topic

[1] Jack Angstreich speaking in Kijak: 2003.
[2] The concept of 'frames' and 'framings' in the arts and humanities has extensive precedent, which itself draws on prior work in linguistics. See, for example, MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, Wolf: 1999, Malina: 2002, Wolf and Bernhart: 2006, Wolf: 2009, and on its overlap with the theory of paratexts, Maiorino: 2008, Gray: 2010, Smith and Wilson: 2011, Jansen: 2014. As far as I am aware, an argument has yet to be put forward for an 'historical frame' within such studies, which tend to focus on fiction alone (although, as I show in Section 4 of this Chapter, various aspects of the concept have existed independently of such a formulation in work on history/historical fiction). I trace the various approaches to 'framing' in the following section.
[3] For debates around public/popular history, and the assumptions that often come with such generalising terms in an increasingly globalised world, see Groot: 2012 and Berger, Lorenz, and Melman: 2012.

or artefact at hand, and of transference. Within the historical frame, historical methods and interpretive strategies are frequently disclosed for what follows. With reinforcement and repetition over time, this framing process has exerted, and continues to exert, a significant effect on the historical imagination, determining the subjects to be remembered historically, and in what manner (history as inquiry, source material, or how things actually were; history as empirically verified facts, stories, or media reconstructions). These scripts, or ways of conceiving the past, are effectively uploaded from the historical frame – from such things as prefaces – to the imagination. As the main point of comparison for future historical material, these scripts become, in turn, part of the historical frame and its processes. This gradual, ever-evolving feedback loop underpins the reception of historical material, and is the focus of this study. My aim, with the historical frame, is to offer a new perspective on the development of popular impressions of the past by considering how these impressions are stamped, approved, transmitted, appreciated, and inherited.

The argument of this thesis works on two levels. Firstly, it investigates how the historical frame describes the latent constitution of the historical content in works of literature, as well as illustrating what *idea* of history is being proposed. In this, the historical frame is like the information cards accompanying the fragmentary remnants of antiquity in museums, ones that describe the relative importance of the displayed material, often indicating it as representative of a larger trend or narrative of development. More than just the card, however, the historical frame is also the idea of a museum and its relationship with the past, of the way humans have written about and catalogued history, partitioning it according to periods and peoples. The aggregate effect of the historical frame is to affect how the visitor perceives the object on display, encouraging specific modes of viewing and involvement. Of course, without a viewer the information card remains inert, its agency dormant. The second part of my argument is therefore interested in how the historical frame is stimulated by the viewer's experience, which includes their knowledge, cultural awareness and familiarity with the existence and use of signposting in museums.[4] I define as the 'non-public-facing side' of the historical frame the way that readers 'follow' the signposting around historical materials, in person as well as in the mind. This work takes place behind the scenes, but, like the work that authors and publishers undertake to ensure the smooth functioning of the public-facing perimeter of the historical frame, it is a necessary condition for the reception of historical materials, perhaps even for the very realisation of those materials as historical artefacts.

Pausing to look more deeply at the initial points of entry into the historical frame, points represented by the museum placards in the metaphor above, as well as at the reader's exit strategy from this framework, is a recurrent theme in my thesis. The act of entering a museum to view its

[4] Ashton and Kean: 2009, 1 argue that "people are active agents in creating histories."

exhibitions carries with it a whole range of expectations that gesture towards the heterogeneity of potential interpretations and responses to historical material. The act of leaving the museum after the exhibition, however, is part of a consolidation process that paves the way for the growth of a cultural-historical subconscious, one that recognises and responds appropriately to representations of the past, and goes on to demand more of the same framed content. We are interested here in both the individual input of the viewer, who tailors the historical frame according to their predefined expectations, as well as the framing of that experience; how the sheer number of visitors who move through the museum's public-facing framework become bound together in a shared experience of the historical conceptions required to discern and imagine the museum's contents. Much the same, I believe, can be said of reading historical literature. The historical frame as I conceive it is therefore made up of five interrelated elements that reveal its circular production and interlinked human input. They are material, spatial, cultural, cognitive, and imaginative. In this chapter, we will deal with each of these in turn; for now, let us consider how they work together.

Keeping with the museum metaphor, we can see the material aspects of the historical frame in the use of information cards. However, there is also the shape of the artefact (statue, mosaic, or amphora) as well as the building itself, with its often classical facade and grandeur. Then there is the display case (size, format, position), combined with the paths museums encourage visitors to take through history. The material aspect inevitably segues into the spatial, something we will return to. Also in play are the cultural associations of museums, from cataloguing and architectural choices to their association with leisure, education, and colonial 'acquisitions'. As arbitrators appointed to pose questions about the past in the present, they perform an exclusive public service, one that has become embroiled in debates regarding 'stolen objects' and artefact return.[5] These cultural aspects of the historical frame pivot into the cognitive, as the visitor negotiates the material, spatial, and culturally curated space and contents of the museum. This, I argue, shows how the historical frame acts as a nexus for the meeting of multiple framing effects. It is thanks to this meeting that the visitor's heterogeneous readings are developed through interaction with information cards, periodised signposting, and the principles of the institution. And here we move into the imaginative, because, while the visitor will experience the material, spatial, and cultural aspects of the museum and use their cognitive faculties to fathom the relationship between card, artefact, and context, the result of this interaction is imaginative reconciliation of the frame with its framed contents. The artefact becomes an integral part of the historical imagination. Amphorae, including their distinctive black figure and red figure imagery, may become synonymous with antiquity. In turn, this imaginative end point in the framing process becomes definitive for the formation and/or

[5] See, for example, Stefanidis: 2018 on the Elgin Marbles.

perpetuation of various material, spatial, cultural, or cognitive trends within the historical frame. Thus vase painting often appears on the covers of translations of ancient literature.[6]

Framing a New Approach

So far, I have treated all types of historical representation equally. Different modes of historical representation are not, however, considered by most practitioners and recipients of history to be equal, and herein lies the focus of my thesis. In a culture and society that has inherited an innate tendency to separate historical and fictional works, in spite of sustained philosophical challenges, what then happens when the historical frame is evoked by works of historical fiction?

Historiē was the term originally given by Herodotus (the 'Father of History') to the account of his inquiries into the hostilities between Greek and non-Greek people during the Persian Wars.[7] From its beginnings, narrative history, in no small part due to the historical frame, was, and continues to be, framed as an investigation into the truth of past matters.[8] All subsequent historical output presented along similar lines has been offered as a continuation of this approach, similarly relating to the web of hereditary, authoritative, and accepted – though open to revision – statements about the past.[9] Bolstered in the nineteenth century by history's association with empirical observation of evidence and 'historical facts', a clear image emerges of the qualities and benefits of history. Such work, it would seem, cannot contain 'fiction'. This is because 'fiction', a younger term than 'history', is associated with the composition of false, though believable, statements that, instead of being grounded in verifiable accounts, speak of broader human nature. In the words of Raymond Williams, "fiction has the interesting double sense of a kind of imaginative literature and of pure (sometimes deliberately deceptive) invention."[10] Neither of these qualities can be easily reconciled with the aims of history if basic distinctions between truth and untruth are to be maintained, between imagination (however perceptive) and research.

And yet, since its first evocation in Herodotus' writings, 'history' has carried ostensibly incompatible associations with 'fiction', understood variously as the use of invention, poetic structures, or the inclusion of falsehood. The 'Father of History' also goes by another name; the

[6] See, for example, the translations of Graeco-Roman texts published by Penguin Classics and Oxford World Classics; of course, the choice of imagery also fulfils another function in that it often depicts stories, characters, or events that can be found within the translation, but this does not negate or invalidate a reading of such publishing choices as the perpetuation of intermedial signals that refer audiences back to antiquity.
[7] Herodotus, *The Histories*, 1. *Proem*.
[8] Kenny: 2013, xxviii; Goldhill: 2002, 12-13; Moles: 1993, 89-91.
[9] A glimpse of this 'framing' can be derived from interviews with popular historians who argue staunchly against the imposition of 'historical fiction' on their territory, which they suggest is anathema to invention (whether derived from fiction or historical sources); see Brown: 2017 and Davies: 2013; for more on the 'web' metaphor and how written history is located in a different web to pure fiction, see Gorman: 2014.
[10] Williams: 2015, 90.

'Father of Lies'. Picking up on this long-standing theme, philosophers of history have, for the past half century, forcefully argued for the essentially fictionalised nature of the historical enterprise, whose process involves the imposition of plot, narrative time, and metaphor, and whose inevitably partial and fragmented construction is inextricably entwined from its inception with the ideology of historians and their times. This so-called 'literary turn' has probed the nature of history's claims, revealing its unstable foundations. History, so the argument goes, possesses no privileged or unmediated access to past events.[11] We will return to these ideas later in this chapter, especially the implications they raise for historical representation. What is important to note here, though, is that the vast majority of historical materials or works of history (however popular) are not, to this day, framed as fiction *in spite of* history's problematic claims to truth.[12] The role of the historical frame has always been to separate out historical production as something different from fiction (even when it uses its codes) according to cultural rules that regulate the reception of each.

A study of the historical frame in historical fiction is therefore a study of how its producers and consumers balance the frames of history and fiction the genre evokes. More than this, it is a study of how the self-reflexivity built into these frames, derived from their attempt to regulate each other, continues to play a vital role in the reception of historical ideas today. Acting as a locus for self-reflexive commentary on the notoriously porous boundaries between what is understood as history and what is knowable through fiction, the historical frame educates readers regarding what *is* history, what *is* fiction (even if these turns out to be suspect), and is in turn reproduced by readers who engage with the claims to truth made within its aspects. What makes historical fiction interesting from a framing angle is that its fictional and historical frames appear to contradict each other. The fictional frame requires readers to engage with stories differently than they would with works of history, to suspend disbelief and remain aware that characters and events are not real. At the same time, notes hijack reader trust in historical statements, presenting what has already been framed as fiction as a continuation of these statements, supplementing the record. To complicate the matter further, author's have deployed self-aware prefaces to advocate for the postmodern idea that all historical writing is fiction, and therefore that an honestly presented fictionalised rendition of the past can itself be considered no less historical in its search for truth. This is where the stakes of my thesis lie, with the blurring of the historical and fictional frames. It is this blurring that creates a

[11] We will explore these ideas and their relationship to the historical frame/historical fiction further in Section 4 of this Chapter. For the main proponents of this deconstructionist approach, see White: [1973] 2014 and 2005, Certeau: 1988, Munslow: 2006, Jenkins: 1991 and 2009, and Curthoys and Docker: 2006; for studies that put such ideas into practice, see Hopkins: 1999, Hutcheon: 1988, Southgate: 2009, and Macfie: 2014.
[12] See Southgate: 2009, who also argued that the philosophical critique of history runs counter to historians' claims, and especially to the reviews of historical narratives that package them as history.

negotiated site ripe for investigation, as it is the very place where these contradictions and paradoxes are established and worked through before, during, and after a reading.

The outcome of this blurring is the generation of a distinctive presentation and concurrent understanding of history and its subject. Rather than acting to reinforce or develop what has come to be known as the discipline of History, this combined framing results in both conservative and radical receptions of the past, in playful, ideological, and educational engagements with historiography, all of which has subliminal implications for the consumption of public history. When the reader receives images of the past through the fictional and the historical frame, these images challenge the division that the historical frame on its own creates between historical writing, regardless of popularity, and literary fiction. The addition of the fictional frame leaves space for conflicting, (in)combatable renderings of the past in the imagination, while also problematising the question of who is authorised to 'tell' history. In simulating the search for, discovery, and revelation of the past to readers of different periods, the fictional and the historical frame have combined to construct and cultivate an experience of the stories offered by historical fictions, as well as of history more broadly. Together, these frames have come to define the ways that history can be brought to life, personalised, and remembered, and what is at stake socially and culturally for the present when important and/or neglected historical moments or peoples are reconstructed.

I take my cue from the recent work of Jerome de Groot, who has advocated for how historical fictions "create, state, and enable different historic encounters, new modes of pastness, a new historicity."[13] de Groot has focused on the remaking potential and consumption of historical fictions in popular culture, on their influence over the historical imagination, as well as the way they encourage reflection on the construction of history, helping to develop a new epistemology. He argues that historians should take these gestures seriously because it is within them that ideas of history, and those entwined, e.g. time, identity, and nationhood, are widely debated.[14] In many ways, this type of advocacy for the genre is a continuation of that begun by twentieth century theorists, who in turn were responding to the rise of the historical novel and the consolidation of the discipline of History in the nineteenth century. We will return to this at the end of the chapter. For now, a brief survey of these precursors will help to situate my own discussion.

The British historian Herbert Butterfield, writing in 1924, said that he wished to "track down the peculiar virtue of fiction as the gateway to the past."[15] He argued that fiction could bring history to life for a wide audience, because history (not the past) failed when it comes to the personal. Butterfield concluded that the historical novel should be read alongside history books, each

[13] Groot: 2016, 152.
[14] See e.g. Groot: 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2016.
[15] Butterfield: 1924, 1-26.

enlivening the other.[16] In 1955, the Marxist philosopher György Lukács published his influential monograph on the historical novel, which explored how, by reflecting societal upheaval in the nineteenth century, historical novels managed to capture in fictional characters social shifts in the "prehistory of the present," allowing audiences to relive the past and consider its influence on their present.[17] The historical novel, after the fall of Napoleon, was seen by Lukács to educate audiences, furthering the historicising work of the novel by offering direct and typological knowledge of past societies.[18] The point of the historical novel was not just to retell events, but to embody "the poetic awakening of the people who figure in those events."[19] According to Lukács, the historical novels of Walter Scott were clearer in their depiction of societal development *because* of their creative flexibility and anachronisms, which enabled the "authentic reproduction of the real components of historical necessity."[20] Later in the twentieth century, Avrom Fleishman developed Lukács argument, suggesting that historical fiction "retells history in order to make a truer story than has been written by historians, prophets, or other artists. The story is not truer to the facts ... but is 'intellectually more acceptable.'"[21] Fleishman's argument is that while the genre's popularity and inaccuracies have drawn sustained criticism, "a novel can tell a truth otherwise hidden" which he developed to show how "fiction is a way of knowing," one that has the same purpose, if not the same means, as other forms of historical knowledge seeking meaning in "meaningless data."[22]

Recent surveys of historical fiction do also differ in important ways from these formative studies. Most notably, they have moved the discussion on from authorial intention and the genre's 'historical' rubric as understood by Lukács to consider a broader history of the genre, while also theorising the effects of fiction on historical representation.[23] Shifting the debate from issues of accuracy and advocacy towards ones of construction, overlap, and deconstruction is illustrative of larger trends in the philosophy of history. These trends can be seen in crossover studies such as Beverley Southgate's *History Meets Fiction*, as well as the work of Hayden White, Frank Ankersmit, Keith Jenkins, and Alun Munslow, who, following the 'linguistic turn', have challenged the very nature of historical narrative.[24] This movement away from traditional approaches has also been inspired by practitioners and critics of postmodern historical fiction. Works by John Fowles, Salman

[16] Butterfield: 1924, 95-112.
[17] Lukács: 1989, 53.
[18] Ibid., 282-284 and 333; see also Cowart: 1989, 4 and Marx: 2011, 188.
[19] Ibid., 42.
[20] Ibid., 59-63; see also Groot: 2009, 182.
[21] Fleishman: 1971, 10.
[22] Ibid., x-xv.
[23] Roberts and Thomson: 1991, 1-3 point out that the two main approaches to the genre are either historical, tracing its roots and evolutionary contexts, or fictional, focusing on the abstract; see also Mitchell and Parsons: 2013, 2, Hamnett: 2011, Groot: 2016, Maxwell: 2009, Boccardi: 2009, Phillips: 2013, and Rigney: 2001.
[24] See White: [1973] 2014 and 2005, Ankersmit and Kellner: 1995, Jenkins: 1991 and 2009, and Munslow: 2006 and 2007; see also Southgate: 2009 and Groot: 2016, 3-8.

Rushdie, Jeremy Reed, and Ursula K. Le Guin have utilised the full range of historical and fictional techniques to destabilise grand narratives and the record, instead offering alternative knowledges of the past through queer, female, and postcolonial histories.[25] Suffice to say, the genre resides at the heart of ongoing debates about the philosophy of both history and fiction.

Rather than focusing on how the past is represented in historical fictions, I am interested in what happens around the story. While scholars have begun to look to the margins and frontiers of historical fiction to untangle its claims to truth, this thesis establishes the first comprehensive framework for analysing the framing of history in fiction.[26] It does so by drawing out tendencies that have existed since antiquity, and also by suggesting how this might challenge assumptions about the genre that focus predominately on the story. My argument is less about how historical fictions borrow tropes from historical writing or query historical representation, and more about how the interface between the public- and non-public sides of the historical frame triangulates communication between reader, the past as it can (or has) been known, and its representation, initiating forms of relationality. The historical frame, I argue, brings into focus various diagonals complete with historiographical stepping stones separating different modes of history, along which the reader moves in their pursuit of imaginative reconciliation. When we take the historical frame into account, I do not believe it is possible to argue, as de Groot has done, that "historical fictions are texts that suggest an experience of a 'past' that cannot and does not exist, insofar as it is fictional and the past is irretrievable."[27] de Groot uses Derrida's analysis of mime to argue that historical fictions, particularly those that use the realist mode in storytelling, "gesture ... to something that does not exist [and] that never happened."[28] The problem, however, is that in Anne Carson's words, "something means not nothing."[29] The story may be mimetic in its representational strategies, but the historical frame demonstrates that there is never a moment when intertextual references, the historical imagination, historiography, prior experience, and other historical materials are not also working to shape the experience of the past gained by reading fiction. Indeed, the historical frame actually corresponds to reality (as far as anything written can) in that it matches known aspects of antiquity with later fictional renditions. There really was an emperor named Julian who has left

[25] For critical approaches to the postmodern approach, see Wesseling: 1991 and Hutcheon: 1989 and 1988.
[26] Southgate: 2009, x refers to the importance of the frontier between history and fiction; examples of scholars looking to the margins include Groot: 2016, 22 who studies paratexts to show how historical fictions engage in historiographical work; Hutcheon: 1989, 81-92 takes a similar approach to the paratexts of postmodern historical novels and the way they appropriate tropes associated with history to self-reflexively question historical knowledge and narrative forms; Wake: 2016, 80-96, meanwhile, has looked at how the paratexts in popular history oversee and accommodate historical fictions, which can lead to a questioning of boundaries, while Bennett: 2015, 29-38 has analysed how the paratexts in Robert Graves' *I, Claudius* reinforce the distinction between history and fiction at the cost of artistic licence.
[27] In attempting to redeem the 'fictional' side of historical fiction, this is what Groot: 2016, 3 argues.
[28] Groot: 2016, 182-183.
[29] Carson: 2006, 20.

posterity fragments of his works. His name appears on Gore Vidal's 1964 historical novel, while Michael Ford tells us in the endnote to his 2002 novel *Gods and Legions* that Julian's own words were used in the story wherever possible.[30] de Groot's mimetic analogy, by focusing on "mimicry imitating nothing," cannot account for how the frame provides this additional material, nor how the frame helps to realise the historicity of and within alternative, neglected, or partisan accounts.[31] Reader engagement with antiquity in fiction is as historically structured as any other reference to the ancient world, with echoes not just of historiography, but also material relations to the past, reconstructions that mark what was original, what has been added.[32] In co-opting not just the tropes of history but its entire frame, historical fictions point to, and also modify, a substantive presence, something 'real' enough that it often finds its way into popular histories.[33]

This thesis, therefore, aims to investigate the ways that readers have been encouraged to think about ancient historical periods when engaging with historical fiction, and the ways that they might as a result of such an interaction. In this, I build on and develop what has been called 'nudge theory'. This sociological approach to decision-making spotlights 'choice architects', a term for those who influence human decision making by shaping the contexts in which those decisions are made.[34] Consideration of choice is important given that the genre of historical fiction has a globalised (largely Western) readership, accounting for a significant percentage of the billions of books sold each year, with titles frequently appearing in best-seller lists and readers often indicating their preference for historical themes and characters in large reading surveys. It is safe to say that reading historical fiction is not a niche interest in book culture, and that those who invest in the genre, from casual readers to academics, do so at the behest of a globally-influential industry with eye-watering revenues and immanent market control.[35] Add to this the popularity of Rome and antiquity more generally as a topic across multimedia platforms and it is clear that the choices readers make when accessing ancient history are themselves determined by extratextual factors. From Edward Bulwer Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* to Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* and the *Total War* phenomena,

[30] Vidal: 1964; Ford: 2002.
[31] Groot: 2016, 183.
[32] Historical fictions, thanks to their frames, are thus complex 'popular' artefacts that direct historical understanding, even for those without formal historical education, at the same time as they suggest they should be read analogously to reality (Bourdieu: 1984, 1-5 situates this as a symptom of 'popular' taste).
[33] See Gilchrist: 2019 for how historical fictions not only draw on, but also bleed into historiography.
[34] For more on nudge theory, see Thaler and Sunstein: 2008, 1-16.
[35] The methodology for estimating book sales and popularity is notoriously tricky; when do you look, for example? Do you look at reading preferences, surveys, reading groups, book clubs, genres, bestsellers, sales data, or books published? Attempts are being made to work with big data to understand and contextualise publishing trends; for more on this and what the data shows about historical fiction, see Yucesoy, Wang, Huang and Barabási: 2018, see also Verrillo: 2017 on estimating popular literary genres, Kowalczyk: 2014 for estimates of best-selling books by genre, and Tod: 2015 for small-scale surveys of fans of historical fiction; for a historical survey of the meteoric popularity of the historical novel, see Hamnett: 2011 and Maxwell: 2009.

audiences have been nudged towards specific frameworks of historical understanding by the architects of a globally commercial market that highlights certain aspects of antiquity. In our study, 'choice architects' are, quite obviously, the publisher and the author. However, we will also consider how historiographical tradition might be a 'choice architect' by inversely affecting the choices available to authors and publishers. It is also worth bearing in mind how the reader can be a 'choice architect'. The public-facing historical frame may attempt to coerce, but readers and critics choose what to buy or praise, moving with or against 'nudges' in their responses. In attempting to predict trends and what will sell, those involved in publishing – from literary agents to editors and sales teams – empower the reader as the arbitrator of choice in an ever-growing market. Each of these active choice architects may be aware they are creating nudges, or they may not be. Either way, what matters for us is that these nudges ground certain reception strategies. As we will see with the public-facing frame, these are not 'neutral', but engage in complex ways with history and the past, opening up certain thresholds while concealing others. Our purpose is to consider the imaginative impact, broadly and personally, of this nudging, from the placement of paratexts to how a simple line drawn on a map can instil tragic connotations in a reading of the past.

Case Study – Late Antiquity

To investigate the construction, use, and impact of the historical frame in works of historical fiction, I have chosen a case study of fourteen novels and the transcripts of two plays published over the last century, each of them set in the Roman Empire in the period known as late antiquity (third – eighth century CE). This is the era that simultaneously saw the rise of the Christian religion from among the sects of the time, the splitting of the empire, and the transition, at least in the West, away from direct Roman rule. The choice of period is significant for five reasons.

First, scholarship on the historical novel has consistently downplayed fiction set in antiquity; a result, as Maxwell notes, of Lukács' dismissal of "ancient history ... as a feasible subject for fiction."[36] Despite the growth of fictional renditions of the ancient world during the twentieth century, critics have mostly confined themselves to examining the literary 'greats'.[37] My case study not only attempts to compensate for this, but also makes the case for how antiquity can challenge the way the genre is theorised. One particularly useful way to do this is to consider how far authors and publishers go to translate the otherness of late antiquity.[38] With the characters, events, and

[36] Maxwell: 2009, 67; the ancient world is mostly valued for the part it played in generating the forerunners of the historical novel, notably epic and tragedy (see Manzoni: 1984, 84-126 and Lukács: 1989, 47 and 89-170)
[37] For Renault, see Tougher: 2008, for Graves, the essays in Gibson: 2015, and for recent articles on Yourcenar's famous *Memories of Hadrian*, see Lucia: 2013 and Bradley: 2008.
[38] Radway's survey of the readers of historical romance in the US showed that readers liked the works for their purported educational benefits in terms of the history of the period (Radway: 1984, 106-13); see also Kennedy

theological debates of the period unfamiliar to a modern audience, the producers of the historical frame expend considerable effort to translate their topic into new contexts. Translation theory can help to examine these efforts, and especially the impact they have.[39] The terms 'domestication' and 'foreignisation' describe the way translations either bring the 'source text' to the reader, or emphasise its 'original' strangeness.[40] With 'domestication', I argue that publishers (and authors) even out the representation of late antiquity by impressing on it certain traits that accord with "preconceptions and preferences" of Rome in fiction, usually in blurbs, covers, or titles.[41] Late antiquity is brought to the reader through recognisable, modern maps of Europe overlaid with historical place names and boundaries, its history 'updated' and explained in prefaces, and related through organic metaphors of rise and fall in intertitles. The translation at work here is mostly invisible as it engages with dominant structures of representing Rome. This helps legitimise a reading of late antiquity from present standpoints, emboldening the reader to find parallels. This is a problematic, if not always unhistorical, exercise. It is rare, however, to find only this type of translation in effect. In addition to domesticating the past – and perhaps even to strike a balance – the historical frame becomes the first step the reader takes back in time to an unfamiliar, 'exotic' past ('foreignisation'). The challenge is to read differently. Chapters are marked by Roman numerals, while contents pages list period-authentic terminology and late antique imperial ranks. Authors highlight how different the period was in notes, reflecting on the intricacies of pagan and Christian concerns, and occasionally even deny the record to construct alternative history.

The second reason for choosing late antiquity is that its events and characters have been a catalyst for writers to explore contrasting religious themes and grand narratives from within the period up until modernity. On the one hand we have the 'triumph' of Christianity over 'paganism'. This narrative can be found in the works of early Church historians such as Lactantius and Eusebius of Caesarea, and it grew in strength after the death of the apostate emperor Julian on campaign in Persia, an event that led to a virtually unbroken line of Christian emperors (albeit ones who favoured different sects). Subsequent theologians and Church historians amplified this narrative, and preserved it in perpetuity.[42] On the other hand, we have the English historian Edward Gibbon's monumental *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* Published in 1776, this work popularised the

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and O'Gorman: 2015, 45-48 for more on these aspects of historiography and historical fiction, and Groot: 2016, 151-152 on the centrality of entertainment to understanding the effect and impact of historical fiction.

[39] See Hardwick: 2000 for an analysis of the translation of ancient texts into modern contexts (the way translators adapt, attempt to imitate, or remain faithful to the source text), how these creative translations become the first point-of-call for readers of ancient texts, and what new frameworks they open up.

[40] For the origin of these terms and a comprehensive overview of their meaning, see Venuti: 1995, 1-20; see also Shuttleworth: 2014, 44/59 and Batchelor: 2018 for how translation theory can be used to study paratexts.

[41] See Shuttleworth: 2014, 44; see also Hopkins: 2014, 9-14.

[42] Clark: 2011, 43.

cultural myth of Rome as the archetypal empire that attained a 'golden age' only to fall from within after religious fervour had stolen the spirit of Rome, leaving it vulnerable to barbarian invasion.[43] Gibbon's influence may no longer hold any weight in academic circles, but his ideas remain culturally significant, and have often been recapitulated in novels and films.[44] It is important to note that Gibbon modelled himself on pagan historians, rejecting a Christian way of writing history. He also incorporated and immortalised Ammianus Marcellinus' favourable depiction of Julian as the only late antique emperor to possess all the cardinal virtues.[45] Gibbon, along with Voltaire, Cavafy, and Swinburne, reclaimed the apostate from the triumphal Christian tradition and painted him as an Enlightenment hero and liberator, the tragic figure of a lost cause.[46] These two contrasting grand narratives remain markedly present in fiction, demonstrating how novelists retain an interest in such romanticising portrayals, often in spite of scholarly developments in the study of Roman history over the past fifty years, which include the coining of the term 'late antiquity', designed to highlight the cultural, political, religious, and economic merit of the period.[47] It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that scholars have mostly ignored the gestures of the novels, plays, and more recently, films, TV shows, and video games that have all been set in late antiquity.[48] However, I see the world of late antiquity these fictions have carved out as important, and not just because they maintain the cultural myth of the decline and fall or the triumph of Christianity. Even after religious themes fell out of fashion at the end of the nineteenth century, which is where they have remained ever since as a result of society's secularisation, my case study bucks the trend by following in the footsteps of nineteenth

[43] Theodore: 2016, 51 notes that this grand narrative (he terms it a myth) is important, not in terms of understanding what actually happened, but as a reflection of what people have believed and invested in.
[44] See Theodore: 2016 who explores Gibbon's legacy in films such as Anthony Mann's *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964), Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000), and Alejandro Amenábar's *Agora* (2009).
[45] Ross: 2016, vi-10 and Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*, 25.3; see also Woodman: 2003, 46.
[46] See Murdoch: 2003, 7, who goes on to explore later additions to Gibbon's depiction of the emperor.
[47] Heather: 2005, xii refers to this when he notes that although scholarship has pushed the boundaries and traditional assumptions of late antiquity, "Many of these discoveries ... have yet to feed through to the general public, whose expectations (judging, at least, by the prejudices with which some of my students still come to the subject) are still conditioned by older traditions stretching back to Gibbon"; my case study is an attempt to explain the connection between these 'prejudices' and the historical frame; for more on the 'decline and fall' as a modern cultural myth, see Theodore: 2016, 2-3; see also Brown: 1971 for the first detailed account of late antiquity that challenged traditional views, and Clark: 2011, 1-12 for an overview of subsequent debates.
[48] Scholarship on the reception of Constantine in fiction is non-existent; the situation is marginally better with Julian and Helena, with Murdoch: 2003, 204-218 briefly outlining the emperor's screen-time in various fictions since his death, while Drijvers: 2000 and Harbus: 2002 touch on Helena's role in fiction. Along with the novels in my case study, other examples of late antiquity in fiction include the films *Constantine and the Cross* (1961), *King Arthur* (2004), *Agora* (2009), and *Decline of an Empire* (2014), the miniseries *Attila* (2001), the two docudrama series *Ancient Rome: The Rise and Fall of an Empir*e (2006) and *Barbarians Rising* (2016), and the video games Rome: *Total War: Barbarian Invasion* (2005) and *Total War: Attila* (2015).

century classical historical novels *The Last Days of Pompeii*, *Ben-Hur*, and *Quo Vadis*, engaging wholeheartedly in religious controversies within representations of antiquity.[49]

The third reason for choosing this case study is that it has consistently picked up on specific topoi, not just from primary sources and the history, philosophy, and poetry of the eighteenth-nineteenth century, but also from the legends of late antique figures.[50] These topoi have, over time, become interdependent, resistant to scholarly debates. Thus we have a series of novels published from the mid-twentieth century onwards that focus on the first Christian emperor Constantine and his oft debated 'conversion'.[51] Late antiquity is presented here as the era that inaugurated a new and distinctly familiar world order. Although a few novelists critique the emperor, or make use of his life simply as scene setting, they can all be plotted within the wider tradition of the triumphal Christian narrative. They include Dorothy L. Sayers's *The Emperor Constantine* (1951), Frank G. Slaughter's *Constantine: The Miracle of the Flaming Cross* (1965), Colin Thubron's *Emperor* (1978), Irene Brand's *In this Sign* Conquer (1996), Paul Doherty's *Murder Imperial* (2003), and Stephen Baxter's *Emperor* (2006). There are three other novels that work within the same narrative, and which take Constantine's mother, the Empress Helena, as their protagonist. They consist of Louis de Wohl's *The Living Wood* (1947), Evelyn Waugh's *Helena* (1950), and Marion Zimmer Bradley and Diana L. Paxson's *Priestess of Avalon* (2000). The first two are evangelical in scope, upholding Helena's miraculous discovery of the True Cross as an example to live by. The third follows the same patterns of events, but attempts to recover Helena as a spiritual and feminist icon. The novels that follow in Gibbon's footsteps are easy to group. Despite spanning a century, their theme remains consistent. In these works, the era is one of decline, the last nail in the coffin for Rome's pagan past. Julian is the tragic hero, trying, in vain, to change the course of history. He becomes a destabilising figure, affecting historical causality by asking the reader to consider counterfactual possibilities.[52] Such thought experiments do not just linger on moments of change, but actively create them.[53] The novels include Henrik Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean* (1873), Dmitri Merezhkovsky's *Death of the* Gods (1895), Gore Vidal's *Julian* (1964), John M. Ford's *The Dragon Waiting* (1983), Michael Curtis Ford's

[49] See Stevenson: 2018 and Maurice: 2017, 10 and 302, who argues that religion is no longer a prime focus in fiction set in antiquity due to the secularisation of society.
[50] For scholarship on the legends of Constantine, see Lieu and Montserrat: 1998; see Richer: 1978 for an overview of the receptions of Julian up to 1715, and Browning: 1975 and Murdoch: 2003 for more recent receptions; for the legends of Helena, see Drijvers: 2000/1992, Harbus: 2002, and Borgehammar: 1991.
[51] See Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine* and Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* for the origins of the 'conversion'; recent historians who focus on Constantine's 'conversion' include Potter: 2013, especially 296-7; MacMullen: 1970; Baynes: 1972; and Burckhardt: 1992.
[52] In *The Dragon Waiting*, Ford demonstrates the gravity of this What if? when he uses it to imagine a world where Julian *did* survive, where Christianity never gained a foothold in Europe; it is not an insignificant thought experiment, and in fact used to hold sway in academia, see Ridley: 1937, ix-xi.
[53] Rubik: 2006, 348; see also Widmann: 2011, Wesseling: 1991, 155-178, Phillips: 2013, 222, and more generally, Cowley: 1998.

Gods and Legions (2002), Reynold Spector's *Who Killed Apollo and Julian Augustus?* (2006), and Paul Waters' *The Philosopher Prince* (2010). The clear divide between these groups shows an attempt by the producers of the historical frame to nudge readers in certain directions. The obsession with Helena, Constantine, and Julian encourages readers to view them as the defining lynchpins of late antiquity, the prime movers in an age of uncompromising religious strife. Whether there was such religious strife, and whether it was more nuanced than the stories imply is immaterial in light of the fact these fictions, by faithfully incorporating polarised primary and secondary sources, frame late antiquity as a world riven by dispute and dominated by imperial personalities.[54]

The fourth reason for the choice of case study is that the historiographical extremes late antiquity has generated are not just present in the story, but are particularly visible in the historical frame. As we will see, the material aspects of the frame do more than simply describe or relay this conflict. In many ways, they perform it, creating anew the religious conflicts of late antiquity, forming its subject matter.[55] The historical frame actively shapes the debate about late antiquity in both popular and academic circles by adopting and reengaging one of the two dominant standpoints (pagan or Christian).[56] The historical frame, therefore, like Edward Said's pertinent framing discourse Orientalism, "*is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different ... world."[57]

The fifth and final reason for choosing late antiquity as a case study is to do with the range of sub-genres the works above have used to explore this fin de siècle in Western memory. They include Christian fiction, crime fiction, queer fiction, feminist fiction, alternative history, dramatic tragedy, military fiction, epistolary fiction, fantasy, philosophy, and biographical fiction. Each sub-genre provides a different insight into the period and its transformations. My thesis will move between them, allowing, for the first time, an investigation into how the historical frame functions across generic formulae and the full spectrum of literary culture represented by these examples. By looking at trends present in the historical frame around these approaches, I offer pioneering ways of studying the reception of late antiquity as it has flourished in popular and literary fiction over the last century, including what perceptions of Rome these have contributed. These trends, I contend,

[54] It was, in fact, far more nuanced: see Sandwell: 2007, Wilken: 2003, Brown: 2003/1971, Papadogiannakis: 2012, and Rousseau: 2002, 195-197; though in many ways, these novels further the "totalizing discourse" (Drake: 2000, 360) of late antique Christian writers, Digeser: 1998, 130-146; see also Clark: 2011, 43; Lukács: 1989, 300 argued that if historical novelists "revel in descriptions of cruel executions and torture," then readers will "regard them only too soon as a necessary peculiarity of the age in question"; it is appropriate to extend this line of reasoning here to consider religious strife.

[55] 'Speech act theory', referred to here, began with Austin: 1962 and Searle: 1969, and was famously developed into a social theory of gender by Butler: 1990.

[56] For example, Polymnia Athanassiadi-Fowden opens her 1981 study of the Emperor Julian by claiming we must look beyond legendary portrayals that shade our opinion of Julian, an example we will return to below.

[57] See Said: 1995, 12.

from the depiction of the empire in cartography to the use of red in cover art, disclose alternative and often overlooked means of tracing how antiquity is remade. At the same time, they help the scholar specify what new traditions are being formed. The 'invention of tradition', I argue in Chapters 2 and 3, is particularly relevant when considering how continuity in the representation of Rome is forged through the repetition of ideas in the historical frame.[58] For example, the frequent use of period-authentic keywords in novelistic titles (such as 'emperor') helps the reader associate Rome with specific and powerful messages, and provides evidence of its ongoing reception.

Ancient Rome, much like the Orient, is not a "free subject of thought."[59] Not only is there no possibility of knowing or imagining Rome except as a result of conflicting and partial representations stretching back to antiquity itself, but whenever a reader engages with the historical frame around these representations, they contend with an additional level of artificiality. A useful parallel to think with here is the role of the 'Classical Tradition'. Since the mid-twentieth century, the 'Classical Tradition' has been a term used to describe the handing-down of (specific) classical materials through language, education, literature, and religion, and how this tradition has in turn influenced, or been opposed by, later societies.[60] The Classical Tradition describes the existence of an underlying, contextualising thread connecting antiquity to authors including Shakespeare and Milton, demonstrating the influence of the classics as they have been incorporated into later work. At the same time, the Classical Tradition is itself a means of inventing, or at least reproducing, the classical, understood as an illusion of cultural prestige and timelessness bestowed on certain works by later receiving societies. The Classical Tradition is not an independent, non-partisan label to be applied where instances of 'the Classical Tradition' are found. Instead, it is identified by the receiving text or culture, and in so doing effects in audiences a means of identifying further instances of 'the classical' through a classicising gaze.[61] Similarly, the writers and publishers of the historical frame in the works listed above have used its aspects to gesture to compelling (if outdated) responses to late antiquity ('decline and fall', 'triumph'), to orientate the reader in relation to the historiography of the period.[62] In doing so, writers and publishers not only identify which approaches to late antiquity have been integrated in the story, they also commission the use of these approaches imaginatively, *suggesting* what is most important.[63] I contend that the historical frame engages with tried-and-

[58] See Hobsbawm and Ranger: 1983, which built on the ideas of Said: 1995.
[59] Said: 1995, 3.
[60] See Highet: 1957, Bolgar: 1954, Kallendorf: 2008, and Grafton, Most, and Settis: 2010.
[61] On this argument, see Porter: 2005.
[62] Said: 1995, 20.
[63] In this, I follow Wyke: 1997, 13, who noted, in regard to antiquity on film, that "Historians should try to understand not whether a particular cinematic account of history is true or disinterested, but what the logic of that account may be, asking why it emphasizes this question, that event, rather than others."

tested constellations of ideas drawn from responses to late antiquity, embedding them further in cultural discourse as ideas to be invested in commercially, and also intellectually.[64]

Imagining Reception

The concept of the historical frame, particularly as I analyse it in my case study, not only marks a step change in the study of the genre, but also the study of classical reception. The two fields are connected, as I see, through the historical imagination. It is worth reflecting on this term, its function within the historical frame, and its relationship to readers and reception.

The historical imagination, especially its structuring capabilities, has long been discussed by theorists of history and historical fiction. As Fleishman argued in the late twentieth century, "The standard for genuine historical fiction is its governance by what, from Carlyle to Collingwood, has been called ... the 'historical imagination.' The historical imagination – like the imagination generally, in Coleridge's definition – is *synthetic*: it unifies disparates, creating an order from the vertiginous kaleidoscope of temporal experience."[65] Scholars who describe the concept do not always use the same term, and talk instead of a "historical consciousness", the reading of narrative history and historical fiction as an "act of community", "historical psychology", "historical sense", or the "historical imaginary".[66] What these terms capture is the "imaginative sympathy" required to 'discover' past cultures, which triggers "self-knowledge [and] self-discovery."[67] This imaginative work is important for us as it takes place in both the mind of the historian, the historical novelist, and the reader, and has a cumulative effect on the collective memory of historical periods.

The poet Anne Carson wrote that "imagination ... acts at the core of metaphor." This act, she argues, is "essential to the activity of reading and writing" because the imagination is able to bring together two dissimilar ideas within metaphor and combine them in a way that looks both forwards to new meanings and backwards to their (now revised) literal meanings.[68] The historical imagination does this with the past, collapsing the information received from historical materials with their distant reference in an attempt to create a mental picture of the past. While historians such as Collingwood have argued this can enable 'empathy', the chance to 'rethink' what historical figures might have thought, scholars of historical fiction have focused on the way the historical

[64] Said: 1995, 5-6.
[65] Fleishman: 1971, 14; see also Butterfield: 1924, 2-22 , Groot: 2010, 48-49 and especially Collingwood: 1946, 232-249, "The historical imagination [has] as its special task to imagine the past: not an object of possible perception, since it does not now exist, but able through this activity to become an object of our thought;" Collingwood does, however, distinguish between a historical imagination that helps us move between the events of history, and that which distorts truth.
[66] See Wyke: 1997, 13; Hutcheon, 1988, 93; Groot: 2009, 3-4 and 181, 2010, 49, and 2016, 152; see also White: 2014, 1-2; Phillips, M: 2013, 80; Roberts and Thomson: 1991, 1
[67] See Hopkins: 2014, 32-33 who develops this through reference to Hume and Collingwood.
[68] Carson: 1986, 73-77.

imagination encapsulates the totality of historical experience readers are subject to.[69] As I see it, the historical imagination is a shadow of the past thrown by representations of the 'real' (history), or by fragmented remains. Much like actual shadows, those thrown by historical materials are neither solid nor tangible, but they do have distinctive shape. They are, in many ways, spectral in character, appearing as a faded remnant of something that has now passed on.[70] They are a *likeness* of what the past *might* have been at its height, drawn from a range of historical experience; they are not that experience itself. And yet – and this is the crucial aspect of the historical imagination – the spectres created by historical materials define what audiences perceive as historical, a perspective only reinforced by their undeniable likeness to the past they claim to be from. Historians first, then historical novelists, and finally readers internalise the secret knowledge of the spectres by projecting themselves into the spectres' minds in an attempt to relive their story, engaging in a seductive conversation that seems to offer a tantalising glimpse of the past fully fleshed out.

Classical reception is similarly concerned with the imagination. Based on a revised formulation of reader-reception theory – and more democratising in scope than the 'handing down' of the Classical Tradition – classical reception investigates how Classical materials, texts, and ideas have been received from antiquity to the present day.[71] More to the point, it has looked at how "*Meaning ... is always realised at the point of reception*."[72] Classical reception is not so much about the reader's reception of a text, but about how (post)classical societies and cultures have generated meaning by receiving Classical materials within the framework of a shared heritage, passing them on in new forms.[73] In this, it sidesteps traditional Classical philology and 'positivistic' approaches to ancient literature that attempt to access 'original' meanings and contexts, cutting out reception as misunderstandings, by highlighting how such things as myth are always already products of reception, in dialogue with past and future, and beholden to diverse audiences in their own time as much as now.[74] The focus has typically been on a later author's remediation of Classical materials, on their examination and valid disclosure of classical antiquity, which is equally important for understanding antiquity itself. More recently, the field has ramified into the study of cultural history, comparative literature, and the history of ideas as scholars have developed the theoretical underpinnings of reception to explore the contexts, meanings, and possible readings of ancient sources, as well as the contexts, meanings, and possible readings of the chain of receptions that

[69] For the former, see Collingwood: 1996, 215-216 and 1939, 114-115, and the latter, Butterfield: 1924, 2-3 and Groot: 2009, 249-250 and 2016.
[70] I'm drawing here on the etymology of 'image' defined in Clark: 2011, 112.
[71] See Hardwick and Stray: 2008, see also Martindale: 2006 and 2008a, Hopkins and Martindale: 2012, Porter: 2008; Butler: 2016, Hanink: 2017, OUP's *Classical Presences* series and Bloomsbury's IMAGINES series.
[72] Martindale: 2008a, 3.
[73] Willis: 2017, 2-3; Hopkins: 2014, 7.
[74] See Martindale: 2008a, 3-10, Hopkins: 2014, 6-7, and Zajko and Hoyle: 2017.

ensues.[75] It has even come to include studies focused on the very obstacles that impede research into this area, on the Deep Time that paradoxically connects and separates modernity from antiquity.[76] What I will draw on is the development of a dialogic approach to classical receptions. This approach argues that receptions are a two-way, open-ended dialogue with antiquity. While antiquity offers fragments up for interpretation, its many reviewers have unearthed additional potentials, swelling those same fragments.[77] Reception, in this instance, is "never a lone encounter between two parties," but part of a network of interchange.[78] Reception becomes a process (not just a point).[79] Reception as process is not unique to classical reception theory; scholars of memory have also begun to investigate reception in this way, albeit in terms of a reading community's reception of a text and the process by which texts and films influence memory-making.[80] At the start of this Introduction, I suggested the historical frame itself acts as a process, one that shapes the reception of the concepts and content of historical materials. Below, we will see how the wider dialogue of reception (both reader-response and classical reception) can be seen at work *within* the process of the historical frame, which orchestrates an intricate conversation between multiple producers and receivers and prefigures the possibility of gaining new historical perspectives.[81]

There have been a number of perceptive and groundbreaking studies devoted to the reception of Greece and Rome on screen.[82] Relatively few, however, have focused on reception and historical novels.[83] This is representative of a tendency that sees historical fiction receive far less attention than the reception of ancient texts and materials. There are perhaps three reasons for this. The first is that Classicists and archaeologists are quite clearly experts in Classical texts, theories, and materials, and so the reception of these has garnered the most attention. Ancient historians have been slower to pick up on the opportunities offered by reception.[84] The second is likely due to the difficulties in reconciling the terms 'reception' and 'history'. What do we mean if we talk about the reception of ancient history, as opposed to Virgil's poetry? Is it the past, which never appears unmediated (and requires historians to first 'receive' and combine conflicting sources), or the

[75] For more on these developments, see Hardwick: 2003, Hardwick and Stray: 2008, Harrop and Hall: 2010, Martindale, Evangelista, and Prettejohn: 2017, Zajko and Hoyle: 2017, Maurice: 2017, and Jansen: 2018.
[76] This is the approach of the essays in Butler: 2016.
[77] See, for example, Martindale: 2008b, Hopkins: 2014, 11-14, and Whitmarsh: 2006 who draw on the theories of Iser: 1978, Jauss: 1980, and Bakhtin: 1982 and 1986, as well as T.S. Eliot, who said that the past is "altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past" (quoted in MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 6).
[78] Hopkins: 2014, 11-18.
[79] See Goldhill: 2010.
[80] This is the position taken by Astrid Erll, quoted in Mitchell and Parsons: 2013, 2.
[81] Hopkins: 2014, 14.
[82] See, for example, Michelakis: 2013, Nikoloutsos: 2013, Wyke: 1998, and Wyke: 1997.
[83] The few that do tend to focus on leading literary figures, such as Robert Graves (Gibson: 2015) or Mary Renault (Tougher: 2008); alternatively, there has been recent attempts to cover this area through a brief and general survey (Stevenson: 2018), as well as an edited volume (Maurice: 2017), but these are under-theorised.
[84] Lee and Morley: 2014 might be an exception, but its primary focus is still Thucydides' *History*.

reception of the process of representation? Is it the reception of the outcome (histories), or of later revisions? Is it historical content, or ideas of history? Each of these reveals the difficulty in clarifying the object of reception. The third is that historical fictions, unlike history, do not just receive and write back but reconstruct in real time the very era that generated classical receptions and histories, enabling their audience to 'meet' historical figures, including ancient historians, and experience the immersive immediacy of events, an act of reception that inverts (by reversing and turning inward) the temporal thrust of reception scholarship. This experience, of course, is not spontaneous. What brings it about are the primary and secondary strands of historically-oriented reception that the historical frame itself embeds. Scholarship on the reception of Greece and Rome in historical fiction has mostly failed to take these issues into account. The focus has been on 'instances' of classical reception in works of historical fiction, or on how generic themes change over time and in different socio-historical contexts, rather than on the problems of 'history' and 'reception'.[85]

While there are systemic limitations in the language of classical reception when it comes to dealing with these additional complexities, I argue that the historical frame provides the means to consider instead the various spaces outside the story that introduce, 'layer', and consolidate the reception of antiquity in fiction. The aim of this thesis is to think about how these spaces are influenced by historiography, and negotiated by the author, publisher, and reader. I will show how the historical frame embeds enduring ideas of history, fostering emblematic, period-authentic themes through branding, as well as how these receptions offer a framework for reading historical representations. The latter should be understood in the sense of a critical review, which brings together – and even generates through summary and evaluation – important threads in the discourse of history and its many manifestations in the present. These receptions offer a procedural means of reading the story, and by extension any forthcoming narrative set in a similar period. It is precisely the result of the interaction between the reader and the historical frame evoked by works of fiction that creates the possibility of shadows being cast by fictionalised reconstructions, and therefore of antiquity being remembered in certain iconic ways.

My central contention is that an intrinsic part of any reader's experience of antiquity can be put down to the historical frame (whether or not they read on), just as the museum visitor will come away with a strong sense of a period based on a museum's curating and signposting. Reception in the historical frame is about more than the specific concerns of the story. The historical frame is tied to, and engages with, wider knowledges of antiquity, helping to clarify the position of Rome within the public's historical imagination. In this way, the historical frame not only offers a fresh way of looking at historical fiction, but it also opens up an untapped resource regarding the reconstruction

[85] This is how Maurice: 2017 and Stevenson: 2018 present their findings.

and formation of the Graeco-Roman past in the genre – and therefore in the historical imagination. Classical reception makes it clear that scholars and audiences alike have been viewing the ancient world through multiple lenses, from those created within antiquity to modern receptions and the questions we ask of the past.[86] In the case of the historical frame, what readers are dealing with is a 360 degree lens that moves from frame to story to antiquity and back, providing a snapshot by which they will judge the ancient world *initially*, *comparatively*, and *consequentially*.

The Public-Facing Frame

In order to examine the relationship the historical frame has created with the Graeco-Roman past, it is necessary to return to its five component parts and consider how they work in historical fiction. As already mentioned, the historical frame is made up of material, spatial, cultural, cognitive, and imaginative elements. In terms of materiality, my case study (and thesis at large) is indebted to the 'material turn' in literary studies, one that takes into account the physical construction of a book, its various constituent parts, and how these have contributed to book culture.[87] The choice of so large a case study comes to the fore here, as I propose to look at the paratexts of each of work. Paratexts encompass everything from titles, covers, credentials, character lists, and intertitles, to historical notes, cartography, and extracts. In terms of the museum metaphor, paratexts are the equivalent of the information cards that determine an artefact as an artefact (and not a forgery or reconstruction). For our purposes, paratexts should be understood as the tangible, material markers that make present the historical (and fictional) frame. Gérard Genette, whose 1987 book *Paratexts* continues to shape discussion of these liminal devices, argued that paratexts "*present*" the book, ensuring "the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book."[88] We will encounter Genette again in the following section, including criticisms of – and improvements to – his model suggested by later scholars. I propose to expand Genette's analysis by looking at the evolution of paratexts in a genre (historical fiction) to which he gave, at best, only a cursory glance, as well as by expanding the potential number of paratexts that can be studied in the modern book-artefact. The latter is made possible by shedding Genette's insistence that the author (or their allies) should be both the sender and guarantor of the paratext and its 'illocutionary force'. This is problematic for a number of reasons when we look at historical fiction.

[86] See Porter: 2008, 474.
[87] For other examples of this 'turn', see Greetham (1997), Gunzenhauser (2010), Littau (2006), Mak (2011), and Watson (2012); the 'turn' has been put down to the digital revolution and recent advances in the study of book history, which have enabled literary scholars to ask new questions, see Levy and Mole: 2017; the idea of the book as artefact and its relative impact had already attracted scholars before the digital revolution, however, with Adorno suggesting that "only when printed do texts take on, really or apparently, that objectivity in which they definitely detach themselves from their authors" (Adorno: 1992, 22).
[88] Genette: 1997, 1.

Firstly, Genette's argument that paratexts are "characterised by an authorial intention and assumption of responsibility" fails to account for the role of the publisher, who also inscribes frames that contribute to the historical imagination (covers, extracts, author biographies).[89] This material has to fit within existing, globalised market expectations, and requires the reader engage with it in a cognitive and imaginative manner no differently than they would a title or preface. Genette's focus on authorial intention and responsibility does not allow for such structures, because, while he looks briefly at the publisher's paratext, he treats it as purely "typographical and bibliographical in nature."[90] While publishers may not intend to provide dynamic reception strategies for the books they publish (let alone history), that does not mean that the way they constitute their commercial products cannot have this effect.[91] The economic production of historical fiction is part of the historical frame. Publishers have a responsibility to sell books, but the process of laying down advertising and branded structures can create unintended consequences in the construction of the historical frame, shaping the image of a period such as ancient Rome through colour, codes, and concepts. Secondly, Genette privileges the 'illocutionary force' of paratexts, because for him, the author (or their allies) authorise the paratext to produce in the reader a certain type of reading, and therefore the paratext is "always subordinate to 'its' text."[92] The issue for us is that the paratexts of historical fiction, produced variously by the author, publisher, and/or selected groups of readers (i.e. cover reviews), do more than simply comment on the text – they legislate for the reconstruction of the past in the present. Far from being subordinate, the paratexts of historical fiction, I argue, mediate their own concentrated framing narratives. These can be linguistic or visual, and, while they possess illocutionary force, understood by Genette as "informing, making known an intention or interpretation, conveying a decision, expressing a commitment, giving advice, issuing commands, or even operating as performatives," their functions go beyond his taxonomy.[93] In the next section, we will look in detail at how my pairing of paratextual theories with those of framing theorists enables an examination of the paratextual *effects* of the material aspects of the historical frame.

'Material' in this sense refers less to the paper that the book is printed on (though that in itself can and has been considered a paratext), and more to those other *materials* that are required to make sense of a book, to the organisation, presentation, and use of this material.[94] Paratexts remind us that the book is a product produced by a number of competing agencies (author, publisher, reader), meant to be bought, held, and perused. As this chapter proceeds, I will pick apart

[89] Genette: 1997, 3 and 8-9; Watson: 2012, 3 also challenges Genette's authorial focus.
[90] Ibid., 17.
[91] See Birke and Christ: 2013, 67-68 on the commercial side of paratexts.
[92] Genette: 1997, 12; see also also Maclean: 1991, 278 who makes a similar argument.
[93] See Batchelor: 2018, 18-19, who summarises Genette: 1997, 10-12.
[94] Such materials have long been seen by book historians as part of the 'bibliographic code' that is read in tandem with a book's 'linguistic code', see Levy and Mole: 2017.

the different influences that the marketing, production, and reading of historical fiction have had over paramaterial. For now, let us stick with the historical frame and the materiality of the book. Paratexts are informative, as we have seen. However, rather than treating them as only as accompanying features, Genette argued that "the paratext is what enables a text to become a book."[95] In this, paratexts are like the information cards *and* the outline of an artefact in a museum, providing details about the story, as well as determining its shape and style. The appearance of historical novels is where the materiality of the historical frame bleeds into the spatial and cultural. Modern generic designs are the result of a long series of experiments with the book's material substrates. Titles, for example, have moved from inside the book to the front cover, while cover art itself is a relatively recent addition in the history of the book, the result of advances in advertising and branding. This is significant for a study of the historical frame in fiction because the placement of paratexts frames what they say, powerfully suggesting how they should be read and why they matter, a phenomenon that is mirrored at the higher level of genre, where historical fictions are arranged in shops and online recommendations according to sympathetic responses of similarity, creating a seemingly ordered historical experience. By investigating how and when paratexts came into being, who created them, what they were created for, how they have evolved with the genre, and what spatial relationship they have with its stories, I will show how the material, spatial, and cultural aspects of the historical frame work together towards certain ends, for example the insertion of historical alternatives into the record. This is the equivalent of considering the cultural history of museums and their layout in relation to its information cards and artefacts.

Paratexts, I contend, are a useful starting point for a study of this kind, and at the same time a valuable example of the nexus at the heart of the historical frame, a focal point for various receiving bodies interested in the past.[96] Examining the history and development of paratexts in historical fiction is the first step to understanding the existence of the historical frame, the experience it has provided readers of the past, and how this has been refined over time. The second step requires a hermeneutic approach, which I apply to the paratexts of my case study in order to demarcate between the author's and publisher's response to late antiquity and its representation in fiction – between their place as initial interpreters and producers of historical meaning – and the reader's input. What this interpretation will reveal is that, in addition to the cultural frames elicited by the book-as-artefact and its paratextual development, there exists, embedded in the paratexts of historical fiction, ideas of history that have their own cultural tradition. The cultural aspect of the

[95] Genette: 1997, 1.

[96] Wolf: 2006, 16-17 demonstrates how textual and contextual framings in literature lie at the heart of the analysis made possible by framing theory, not least because they delimit an area to work on, but also because they show how the sender and receiver's framing activities are not free-floating, but grounded.

historical frame is therefore three-fold, involving the appearance of historical fictions, their use as leisure/educational objects, and treatment of deep-rooted historical practice. This is analogous to the museum, whose cultural traditions encompass its material appearance, relationship to education and the tourist industry, and means of cataloguing and presenting the past. I offer, in the chapters that follow, a close reading of titles, extracts, and prefaces to show how the cultural aspect of the historical frame, along with its effect on the appearance of historical fictions and the way they are consumed, draws on established means of conceiving and representing history that can be traced back to the techniques of ancient historical writers. While the paratexts of historical fictions are decisive in the creation of new historical traditions, they are simultaneously the carriers of venerable practice. Such practice may be so familiar as to go unnoticed, but it continues to underpin the reception of antiquity, from the prolongation of writing about Rome by reference to its ruling emperor, to the way extracts of other novels at the end of a work suggest the ancient practice of continuation (where one history picks up from another) and comparability.[97]

The Non-Public-Facing Frame

Only rarely have readers or reading practices been at the forefront of work on historical fiction.[98] Reader-response theory is a useful means of bringing the reader back into focus, as Mitchell and Parsons demonstrated recently with their edited volume *Reading Historical Fiction*, which moves away from authorial intention and formalist analysis of the genre to examine the agency of the reader in untangling the correlation between fiction, history, and the past.[99] I also prioritise the reader in order to explore the constructive relationship between the public- and non-public-facing side of the historical frame. Wolfgang Iser, a leading proponent of the reader-response movement in the late twentieth century, argued that "central to the reading of every literary work is the interaction between its structure and its recipient."[100] This movement began in part as a retort to the New Criticism and formalist approaches to the text that dismissed both the author and the reader from discussion, focusing instead on teasing out meaning from the text's formal features.[101]

[97] For the trend of writing about Caesarism in antiquity, see Tacitus' *Annals*, Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars*, Ammianus Marcellinus' *The Later Roman Empire*, and the historiographical tradition their writings gave rise to; the trend not only continues to this day in fiction, but can also be seen in modern journalism, in comparisons between Trump and Roman emperors, see Jones: 2017 and Dunn: 2017.
[98] Hamnett: 2011, 12, for example, sidelines readership and impact in favour of "what is *in* books"; Groot: 2010, 4 attempts to bring the reader in, but references to who this reader might be are oblique; Lukács: 1989, who set the tone for much of the debate regarding historical fiction, focused on outlining a history of the historical novel, exploring how it came about as a result of social transformations, how it rose and declined; at no point does he consider the reader of historical novels, focusing instead on the story.
[99] See Mitchell and Parsons: 2013.
[100] Iser: 1980, 106.
[101] See Willis: 2017, 1-30; see also MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 96 on the limits of the formalist position when paratexts are introduced that trouble the distinction between the inside and outside of a text.

Iser, along with other prominent critics including Barthes, Jauss, Culler, Fish, Stierle, and Holub, reanimated the figure of the reader and developed wide-ranging methods to show how the reader (a mostly theoretical one, or at least a theoretical community) plays a vital role in the production of meaning.[102] The reader, it has been argued, is more than a neutral perceiving subject for the play of the text, but in fact central to this play. Readers bring the text into being by perceiving its codes and intertextuality, filling in its blanks, and by reading it against (or within) the grain, which in turn develops conventions; in the process, readers offer a reception history of a work.[103]

For our purposes, reading is defined as the inner workings of the cognitive and imaginative aspects of the historical frame, and provides a counterbalance to the material, spatial, and cultural elements of the public-facing historical frame. My approach draws on the theoretical models of earlier theorists, as well as more recent advances in reading cognition and the sociology of reading.[104] Although I am interested in real readers, this thesis does not attempt to offer an empirical analysis of historical or modern readings of the paratexts of my case study.[105] Instead, my aim is to showcase how the process of reading in this genre is framed historically, or, to put it another way, how historical content and concepts are encoded by producing agencies into the historical frame, and how the decoding of these by hypothetical, contemporary readers is a core part of the function of the historical frame. In artificially placing the works of my case study together to show trans-historical similarities and differences in the framing of late antiquity over the last century, I minimise (though do not eliminate) the importance of reading paratexts in their historical context. This is to take into account the fact that readers read (or encounter) works published across the centuries alongside novels that came out only recently. Traditional renderings of antiquity sit comfortably beside – and even inform – contemporary efforts.[106] Reading across the examples chosen can therefore help to disclose the different ways that readers are continually confronted by the historical framing processes of different fictions. Furthermore, while certain paratexts can be read as reflecting their historical context, others have been added during later reprints. Both inevitably outlive their original purpose, continuing to offer reception contexts to new readers. I have opted to analyse just one set of paratexts of each of the works chosen. I hope, by analysing

[102] See e.g. Barthes: 1984, Culler: 1975, Jauss: 1970, Stierle: 1980, Iser: 1978 and 1980, Fish 1980, and Holub: 1984; for a discussion and critique of the universal reader in literary theory, see Littau: 2006, 104 and 25.
[103] See Barthes: 1984, 156-161 on the distinction between the work as object and the text as "methodological field"; see also Jauss: 1970, 7-9, Wesseling: 1991, 19-20, and Rigney: 2001, 31; Willis: 2017 provides an overview of the field, and we will return to her work on reading and reception in section three of this chapter.
[104] See e.g. Peplow, Swann, Trimarco, and Whiteley: 2016, the essays in Gunzenhauser: 2010, and the work of Radway (both her 1984 monograph, and more recent edited volumes) and Collinson: 2009.
[105] While the empirical studies above are interested in real-life readers in a contemporary setting, there is another tradition that has investigated the history of reading, see Chartier: 1988 and Gunzenhauser: 2010.
[106] I saw this at work during my own reading journey through the works of my case study; for example, Vidal's novel *Julian*: 1964 was promoted at the launch event for the National Theatre's production of Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean* in 2011, where Power's adaptation of Ibsen's play was on sale.

these, to offer a partial reveal of the structure that delimits the reading of historical fiction set in antiquity, while emphasising that this is relative and continually evolving.[107] My focus is on what my sample can tell us about the conversation between the paratexts of different works *and* their readers about how best to represent late antiquity, including what cumulative signs this has left in its wake, the imaginative codes that network a delimited framework for reading history.[108]

The other important rationale behind my approach is that paratexts require a varied methodology. Some, such as tables of contents, can be studied for the way they construct an ideal reader, others need to be investigated in terms of the way they implore *every* reader who finishes the book to buy the next, while others still need to be considered from the point of view of a 'market reader' (i.e. the cover and title) who may or may not go on to read the story. Then there are reviews written by historians, authors, and journalists printed on the covers. These reviews can be scrutinised for both the way they frame the reading of the story historically, as well as for the insight they provide into how other readers have accounted for, if not directly reported, their reading experience.[109] Maps, intertitles, and character lists, meanwhile, demonstrate the way that readers, if they make use of these devices, distribute their cognition, extending beyond their mind, not just to turn the page, but to navigate between different depositories of historically-framed artefacts and information.[110] Finally, my own cross-readings are necessarily subjective and bound to gloss interpretations. However, they can be used as a springboard to consider how different constituencies of reader are anticipated by paratexts, and how this might nuance the decoding of the historical frame.[111] The anticipated audience for my case study is a Westernised, English-speaking one.[112] Thanks to a paratextual reading, it is possible to break things down further. We will see how some paratexts suggest the story is aimed at those of a particular gender or sexuality, those with explicit knowledge of Classics and history, and/or those with only a general knowledge (and thus how paratexts can equal the playing field through educational or revisionist means). All of the above are profitable avenues of research, and demonstrate how paratexts frustrate overarching approaches to reading, and require a more circumstantial mode of analysis.

Reichl argues that "the reading process ... is a complex mental operation: the mind sifts through information old and new, recognises patterns, activates memory structures, and

[107] For more on the structures that enable reception, see Willis: 2017, 168-170.
[108] Hopkins: 2010, 28-33.
[109] These reviews are a good example of the impossibility of accessing a 'real' reading; only the aftershocks are available, and even these require interpretation and do not provide unmediated insights.
[110] See Meineck, Short and Devereaux: 2018, 3-4 on 'distributed cognition' theory.
[111] Lang: 2010, 132 similarly emphasises the importance of reception scholars being honest about the relative nature of their own contributions to discourse, to the systemic difficulties in such studies.
[112] Though it should be noted that Ibsen's play was originally written in Norwegian and staged in Norway, and that Merezhkovsky's novel was first published in Russian.

establishes, strengthens or realigns mental network connections."[113] A paratextual reading, I argue here, is a site of particularly acute activity. Paratexts require readers to rapidly reconstruct the past from minute cues, to contextualise the ensuing micro-narratives provided, and to draw extratextually on their experience of history/fiction to empathise and relate to this material, to situate and cogitate. Such extratextual knowledge comes from popular culture as much as narrative history, scholarship, and pedagogy at school. In fact, it is likely to come from all of the above, in varying degrees, as the process of the historical frame is what allows for transference across the artefacts whose reception it regulates. In this way, the non-public facing side of the historical frame has the capacity to mirror the cultural, material, and spatial aspects of the public-facing side, reinforcing and developing them through dialogue and negotiation. Other such examples include readers writing their own historical fiction, or readers reading in certain spaces, for example an ancient site.[114] Whether or not the reader goes on to experience the story, they will have already begun to negotiate a composite experience of history and its referent, one that they will keep coming back to as they put the book down, only to pick up again.[115] Regardless of the assorted cultural, social, and biological factors that will determine a reader's approach to the paratexts of historical fiction, understanding them requires significant mental processing power. It is this processing power that drives the non-public-facing side of the historical frame to make sense of the public-facing side, facilitating a shift from the cognition of paratexts to an imaginative upload of a collage of feelings, concepts, and 'images' the reader has constructed from them.[116] The collage remains in a permanent, 'editable' state, a ghostly outline of the past that can be calibrated against the reader's existing knowledge and the standard laid down in the story to follow.

Unlike Iser, who based his reader-response criticism on how the text's devices "initiate communication and ... control it," I therefore see the reader as 'framing in action'.[117] We can look at the public-facing side of the historical frame to think about how historical content and concepts are encoded, as well as the contexts they provide for decoding, but it is the reader who exerts an equal framing influence, not only in response to nudging trends in the marketplace for historical fiction, but also at a deeper cognitive and imaginative level when it comes to 'following' the signs

[113] Reichl: 2009, 16.
[114] While not a modern reader, there is a famous story in the memoirs of the historian Edward Gibbon, who claimed to have first thought of writing his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* during a tour of Italy while sitting in the ruins of the Roman Capitol, see Lentin and Norman: 1998, viii.
[115] Paratexts, in this sense, help to form texts, or even lead to the creation of entire textual worlds (if the reader only engages with the paratexts; this is the premise of Gray: 2010.
[116] See Smith and Wilson: 2011, 7 for how paratexts affect imagination as well as our approach to books.
[117] Iser: 1980, 110.

presented.[118] Understood in this way, paratexts demonstrate their potential for analysis in terms of the way they enable a "transaction" to take place.[119] Genette proposed this, but as his 'reader' is a particularly passive one, there simply to receive the authorial messages of the paratexts whose purpose is to enable an ideal reading of the work, his argument fails to tackle one of the most interesting aspects of paratexts revealed by reader-response theory. MacLachlan and Reid refocus attention on the idea of transaction by looking at how paratexts and frames "inscribe metamessages about the way we interpret the messages they contain."[120] If we substitute the 'we' in MacLachlan and Reid's analysis for the readers of historical fiction, it becomes clear that they are not simply absorbing information about the novel and its historical topic from paratexts. Indeed, readers are actively grappling, cognitively and imaginatively, with what I call 'framing narratives' embedded in paratexts, with metamessages that revolve around complex conceptions of history and ways of (re)constructing its content. The reader, I argue in this thesis, is involved in a dialogical relationship with the paratexts of historical fiction *and* the receptions of antiquity that they initiate. The paratexts of historical novels are a response to the dialogism of history and the past, but at the same time they exist to anticipate a response from the reader. There is an interactivity here that takes place between reader, paratext, and antiquity on a broadly triangular axis. The dialogue is anything but direct, and has to contend with innumerable intersections brought about as a result of the 'borrowing' inherent in language and the refraction of ideas of history. These intersections extend into the past as well as anticipating the future. The intertextual allusions and deferred meanings that these intersections open up at the paratextual level entangle with the seemingly fixed meanings of a title or blurb, as well as with the reader's existing knowledge of antiquity and what they are told about the past by other paratexts such as notes. The result of the dialogue at any individual present is that the reader, the paratexts, and their referent (the story and history) are transformed. New historical realities are produced that exist in tandem with other, authorised histories, and the reader develops additional ways of seeing the past and themselves. This can happen before the reader even reaches the first page, and continues during as well as after a reading, persisting in conjunction with the commercial production of paratexts and their reception of antiquity in fiction.[121]

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[118] Wolf: 1999, 101-102 makes the case that framing narrows down the frames on offer to the reader, while Gray: 2010, 140-141 looks at how paratexts manage the intertexts a reader might bring to the text.
[119] Genette: 1997, 2; Maiorino: 2008 develops the potential of the 'transactional' metaphor with titles.
[120] MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 104-105.
[121] I draw here, and later in the thesis, on Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia, which describe the perpetual back-and-forth dynamic of statement-response-anticipation and how this process is filled with intertextual allusions and different cultural voices that disrupt meaning (in my argument, this includes both the level of classical reception and reader reception); see Bakhtin: 1982, 279-294 and 1986, 170; Gray: 2010, 44-45/118 also makes use of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism/intertextuality to show how "there is never a point in time at which a text frees itself from the contextualising powers of paratextuality."

Due to the differences between readers, as well as within each reader, it is clear that not all readers of the paratexts of my case study will receive the same meaning, just as the texts themselves would frustrate singular readings.[122] However, paratexts and paratextual readers are a unique case because, while we can study paratexts for their framing narratives (metamessages) and the dialogic way readers interact with their historical composition, we can also study paratexts for the low-level, consolidating influence they can have on their audience. In the coming chapters, I offer both a close reading of the framing narratives in the paratexts chosen, identifying historical in-jokes between author and reader and moments of historical comparability that have to be teased out, as well as an everyday, casual reading.[123] The second type of reading is perhaps more common. Paratexts can be read quickly, even skipped entirely. They seem, especially in our age of serialised novels, games, and TV/film sagas, insignificant compared to the 'main event'.[124] Nevertheless, they are extremely useful in demonstrating the quick transactions readers make when they encounter, for example, similarity across titles, affinity between maps of the Roman Empire, and repeated use of classical statues in cover art. These micro-transactions create patterns of historical identification that possess enormous influence over the historical imagination. "Reading is a way of creating order ... starting out with the recognition of order on the level of letters and words, and moving on to more abstract versions of ordering and patterning."[125] Despite being the most fragmented parts of the text, paratexts facilitate this type of reading for order. In my analysis of paratextual reading, I look at the establishment of an order for reading the story, the arrangement of historical content according to historiographical patterns, and the realisation of the disposition of the past. Each of these strands is brought about when both sides of the historical frame meet at key moments to narrativise the reading experience of the past (beginning, middle, and end). The result of this paratext-reader relationship is the creation of a repertoire of 'shortcuts'. These 'shortcuts' reduce the time and energy deficit of the reading transaction, minimising the effort required to construct a sense of history and the past, not only by supplying established models and invented traditions, but also by triggering an affective attitude towards the past – in our case, late antiquity and Rome more generally is framed by paratexts as an imperial playground, militarised and dangerous, as well as highly religious and politicised, a hotbed of intrigue, sex, and sensation.

Paratexts in historical fiction make visible the public-facing historical frame in terms of how authors and publishers provide beacons that lead from the work's fictional frame and towards its status as historical truth or historical representation. Paratexts also, however, make visible the

[122] Reichl: 2009, 17, Littau: 2006, 123.
[123] See Peplow, Swann, Trimarco, and Whiteley: 2016, 13-14 on 'everyday' reading and how it challenges the highly theoretical readings of texts supposed and championed by researchers; see also Collinson: 2009.
[124] Doherty: 2014, 15.
[125] Reichl: 2009, 33.

historical frame's non-public-facing side in terms of how readers might 'follow' the signs that these paratexts present in pursuit of the realisation – or inverse frustration, as we will see with alternative history – of the work's historicity. And by this I do not just mean the story, but the emotive micro-narratives that the historical frame provides, the historical concepts – invented or otherwise – used to inscribe, describe, and contextualise the content in these narratives and the story they frame, and the construction of affective knowledges of ancient Rome through the above.

Interfacing

In Chapters 2 and 3, I consider what effects paratexts might have if they are read in isolation. Inevitably, however, paratexts will mean more when they are read in tandem with the story they frame (just as information cards are more informative if accompanied by an artefact). The purpose of this thesis is to argue for the value of both sides of the historical frame as means of studying the impact of historical fiction on the historical imagination (and in turn on the historical frame itself). This can be achieved, I contend, by using the historical frame as an analytical tool to explore the way that the framing narratives encountered by readers in paratexts interlock, sustain, and respond to the stories they surround, as well as the Classical settings/receptions in those stories. I see the historical frame as something made manifest in paratexts and readers, at the same time as it is a branch of framing theory that can be applied to understand the framing narratives revealed by its material and spatial aspects, ones that are determined by cultural reception, and subsequently processed by the cognitive and imaginative faculties of the reader. Throughout the thesis, I refer to the framing narratives of paratexts, with the author and/or publisher acting as the narrator or purveyor of the traditions they enshrine.[126] This is in order to differentiate paratexts from the story and its resulting storyworld. There is, as we will see, great overlap between the framing narratives of paratexts and the story/storyworld, especially after the reading of a work.[127] However, it is important that the terminology used provides clarity. While I am fully aware that the stories in my case study are equally narrated or beholden to narrative tropes, when I refer to framing narratives I

[126] 'Framing narrative' has been used before, but primarily to refer to those embedded levels of narrative within a story (a story within a story, as in *Frankenstein*); my usage maintains this association, because paratexts do something very similar in terms of creating nested narratives that readers move between, as well as at times helping to collapse these levels, a trope that also features in framing narratives in postmodern literature, when the space between narratives are erased; see Abbott: 2008, 28-37 and Wolf and Bernhart: 2006, 24; Genette: 1997, 282 briefly refers to the preface as a potential frame narrative, but one that only works at one end, whereas I see all paratexts, those at start, middle and end, as creators of framing narratives.
[127] As Bradley: 2014, 294 argues, "There is ... a strong, narrative connection between paratext and main text."

am talking about the way that paratexts can be said to form narratives of (ancient) history that go on to impact the storyworld and storytelling process of the novel or play involved.[128]

Let us break this down. I am interested in the two primary effects that paratextual framing narratives have on a reader's historical sensibility. The first relates to how these narratives frame the historical contents of fiction by transmitting historical *content*, conditioning the type of past received. This can be defined as the paratextual effect on the constitution of history. A good example is the way cover art appears to represent a historical setting and associated historical characters in charged setups. In doing so, cover art yields a narrative starting point for the story, hinting at or foreshadowing what is to come, as well as narrative closure. We will look at examples of this in the next chapter, at how cover art emplots various ways the past can be envisaged and interpreted in the story, as well as beyond it.[129] The second effect relates to how paratextual narratives open up a dialogue between the reader and their experience of the story, suggesting what ideas of history are applicable or should be taken away, ones that relate to historiography and the preserve of history. These go on to inform the historical imagination, and contribute to the development of the imaginative landscape of Rome. This is the paratextual effect on the reader's conception of history, which, while also informed by the contents of fiction, ultimately transcends it. It is not just the stories, therefore, but the historical frame that "constitute[s] a pervasive and engaging set of modern knowledges of ancient Rome."[130] In Chapter 3, we will look at how endnotes and back-cover reviews in historical novels trigger this dialogue, allowing the critic to model reader behaviour not only at the critical junctions of entry to a storyworld, but also at their exit.

Paratexts invite readers to engage in a specific contract before and after entry.[131] They are, in Genette's terms, "a *threshold*," one that regulates the application of different rules.[132] "On [one] side a given rule rules," wrote Michel Serres in relation to thresholds, while "on the other a different law begins."[133] This is clearly the case with novels, which, when framed as fictions by their paratexts, should be read as different, though perhaps analogous to, reality. The problem is that in marking the entry and exit from the story, paratexts permit the reader to come and go and therefore violate these culturally determined boundaries, confusing the laws upon leaving. While fiction will presumably still be understood as fiction outside its frames, there exists a grey area of transference

[128] Genette: 1980, 25-27 treats the story as narrated content, the narrative as the level of discourse (this is where I situate paratexts), and the act of narrating for the production of the story; see Smith and Wilson: 2011, 10 on the possibilities of paratexts offering their own narrative worlds, while also framing others; see also Liveley: 2019, for a reception history of narrative theory, from antiquity to today.
[129] See Abbott: 2008, 13 on narrative as "*the representation on an event or a series of events*."
[130] (Wyke: 1997, 8).
[131] MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 92-93.
[132] Genette: 1997, 2.
[133] Serres: 2014, 47.

between the internal monologue of literature, and reality as experienced by a reader. This comes to the fore during studies of mass reading, when readers admit to 'hearing' the voices of characters in everyday life, and being influenced by them.[134] This thesis is interested in the way that the framing narratives contained in closing paratexts (such as endnotes and back-cover reviews) enable this type of frame-breaking to occur due to their existence both inside and outside the storyworld, as well as separate from and yet also a part of the reader's reality.[135] In the case of historical fiction, these framing narratives permit the transference of historical concepts in an elaborate two-way process, from reader to paratext (and vice versa), from paratext to storyworld (and vice versa), and from paratext – now informed by the story – to reader (at the close of a novel). As we will see in Chapter 3, the triangle of reader, past, and its representation can be collapsed into a 'strange loop' by the very devices designed to demarcate them, with each impinging on the other and affecting their construction. The resulting effect describes how the experience of reading historical fiction paves the way for seemingly direct 'conversation' with a range of historical possibilities.

Conclusion

To summarise, this thesis will take a diachronic approach to the study of paratexts (looking at how they have developed in the genre of historical fiction), as well as providing a synchronic reader-reception orientated analysis of a cross-section of paratexts in order to describe the workings of both sides of the historical frame in historical fiction set in late antiquity. We can probe the historical frame in fiction for what it can tell us about the reception of late antiquity (what happened, how it should be imagined, how it has been written about), as well as for how ideal, 'market', genre, or other anticipated readers might decode these receptions cognitively and imaginatively.[136] The sections below develop the concept of the historical frame outlined here by surveying the core components of my methodology. I look at the theory of framing, theories of reading, and the construction of history from antiquity to today. I show how each underpins the research in Chapters 2 and 3, and how my findings might revise our understanding of these fields.

As with any new approach to something as protean as historical fiction and the reception of antiquity, this thesis is but the first step, the first studies in the historical frame. It is unable to review every aspect of the historical frame in fiction, and does not attempt to cover television, film, or video games (though Rome remains a popular topic in all three). There will always be additional paratexts to explore (I focus mainly on those that come with the printed book), and further contexts that might inform an interpretation of the material in Chapters 2 and 3, such as publication history or

[134] See Lea: 2017.
[135] Serres: 2014, 47 notes how the threshold can potentially belong to both the worlds it divides.
[136] These are two distinct and important areas of 'reception' invoked by Willis: 2017.

developments in digital print and the digitisation of paratexts. Nevertheless, this study offers a broad and inclusive account of the paratexts that mark *a* beginning to the historical frame in my case study (Chapter 2), those that interrupt the story (also Chapter 2), and those that conclude it (Chapter 3). There is a conscious choice behind this layout. It is designed to model reading, and so my analysis moves from cover to centre, pausing to look at intertitles and footnotes, before decamping to look at endnotes, back cover reviews, extracts, maps, and finally titles. In terms of the historical frame, Chapter 2 systematically examines the public-facing frame, and considers how the reader might interface with this. Chapter 3 is more selective, focusing on closing frames that enable a more detailed examination of the non-public-facing and the reader's exit strategy. In doing so, Chapter 3 breaks new ground. Genette did not treat paratexts that might succeed the story, moving instead to analyse those paratexts found at a distance to the work (interviews and diaries).[137] Other scholars have followed suit, treating initial frames as the ones that matter for interpretation.[138] Chapter 3 acknowledges this blind spot, but instead of turning away from it, deploys the theory of frame-breaking and an analysis of maps, book extracts, and titles to account for how readers might consolidate what they have taken from the work's framing narratives and storyworld. I look especially at the framing effects made possible by closing frames, the way they send the reader back through the story, encouraging them to reframe their experience of it, to reflect on issues as diverse as the gaps in the historical record (and the filling of these gaps), the historical sources that provide information about antiquity (and the way they can be used to retrospectively to reconstruct, embellish, and place the reader in the era they came from), as well as the process of transference of historiographical methodology (contained in such clearly fictional constructs as maps, novelistic extracts, and titles). Closing frames in historical fiction are unique in this respect, affording the reader a non-linear experience of the past that reflects the endless revisions of historical discourse, prompting reconsideration of what influences have been read back, what were there already.[139] I also look at how closing frames propel the reader to reconcile their reframed experience with the historical imagination, thus reaffirming the cycle of reception enabled by the historical frame, with the reader (as well as the writer and/or publisher) sustaining and enabling the production of further material, spatial, cultural, cognitive, and imaginative trends in the historical frame.

[137] See Genette: 1997, 319-344.

[138] See Gray: 2010, 79, Wolf: 2006, 22/296-297, and Wolf: 1999, 106; this, I believe, draws on Genette's assertion that postfaces can only offer a "curative, or corrective, function" (Genette: 1997, 239-239); a rare example, Bunia: 2006, looks at closing frames as devices that help to 'complete' a work of fiction.

[139] The Italian writer Italo Calvino once said that "If I read *The Odyssey*, I read Homer's text but I cannot forget all the things that Ulysses' adventures have come to mean in the course of the centuries, and I cannot help wondering whether these meanings were implicit in the original text or if they are later accretions, deformations or expansions of it" (Calvino: 2009, 5); see also Borges: 2000, *Kafka and his* Precursors,234-6 where he asserts, drawing on T.S. Eliot, that "every writer *creates* his own precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future."

The objective of this thesis is to think more deeply about how, from the process of production to reading and encounters with future historical materials, modern society has engaged with antiquity through the historical frame in fiction. By interpreting the paratexts in my case study, I show how it is possible to read across examples to draw out similarities and to quantify, if not empirically, then at least theoretically, the impact that repetition might have on public conceptions of antiquity, the historical imagination, and the historical frame. My paratextual readings determine what type of history is being channelled by framing narratives at critical junctures, and the potential effects the realisation of these narratives can have within different reading constituencies. It also reveals the edge of what I have been calling the historical frame. As noted at the start, this is perhaps better thought of as a frame*work*, one that supports and holds in situ material presences of the past, as well as the methods required to conceive these, both as they appear in a work (or museum), and as they might have appeared in the period they came from. Framework hints at the underlying work required to re*present* something long since passed, and also the work that authors and publishers do in terms of providing the methods to understand these representations, whether they employ historiographical methods from antiquity to the present day, or make use of invented traditions inaugurated by Rome's manifestation in fiction.[140] Framework, finally, points to the reader and the way they bring their own experiential framework to bear on the one they encounter, buttressing historical materials. It reveals how readers extend beyond themselves to maintain intrinsic support structures (the means of representing history), reinforce certain struts (Rome's popularity in fiction), preserve those myths that have fallen into disrepair (or disrepute in the eyes of historians), and implement the necessary procedures (prompted by the public-facing side of the historical frame) for expansion. The two sides of the historical frame co-create a framework that stands between historical materials and their reception, enabling a constant process of transaction and development upon which layers of representation are built. The argument of my thesis is that the historical frame, while appearing to act at the margins of fiction over the course of a reading, in fact manages the reception of antiquity in the story as well as across history and culture, offering imaginative schemas that readers can use to organise their experience of antiquity.

[140] For more on representation and art/reality, see Kennedy: 2006, 291 and Kennedy: 1993, 1.

§2 Framing

"Consumption is not a passion for substances but a passion for the code."[141]
– Jean Baudrillard

The concept of framing theory was established in the late twentieth century, notably in the work of sociologist Erving Goffman, and has since been used in discourse analysis, literature, linguistics, rhetoric, politics, communications theory, cognition, psychology, the study of reality, AI, art, media, and more recently, the ancient economy, visual culture, texts, and linguistics.[142] In Goffman's 1974 study, he defined frames as "principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them."[143] Goffman focused on how frames help us know what is going on in a situation.[144] Differentiating between an event and the organisation of that event in the mind of the one who experiences it, Goffman investigated the process of (dis)integration within the individual. In particular, Goffman analysed the framing of 'faked' events (contests, rituals, acting) in order to think more about how reality itself is constructed.[145] As far as I am aware, there has yet to be a study of history as a frame, let alone how this might work in complex genres such as historical fiction. What concerns us here, therefore, are the features of Goffman's analysis that underpin the typology of the historical frame outlined in my Introduction, the later expansions of Goffman's theory into the field of literary studies (in particular how fiction is framed), and finally, how framing theory can help elaborate on the role of paratexts in literature (and vice versa).

Let us begin with Goffman's point about how frames prepare us to know how to interpret present situations. This can just as readily be applied to the representation of past situations. History, over the centuries, has provided an ample set of organising principles by which readers interpret the existence of the past in the present. The past, as far as it can be known through history, is mediated, not only at the level of narrative, but at the level of the historical frame, which has prepared countless generations to recognise its manifestations.[146] Much like the other seemingly

[141] Baudrillard quoted in Carson: 1998, 4.
[142] See Goffman: 1974, who drew on Bateson: 1955 for the idea of framing; see also Fillmore: 1976 for frame theory and language, Minsky: 1979 for framing and epistemology, Drew and Wootton: 1988 for advances in sociology, linguistics, and psychology, MacLachlan and Reid: 1994 for the first complete study of framing in art/literature, Wolf: 1999 for framing fiction, Malina: 2002 for frame-breaking and individuality, Wolf and Bernhart: 2006 for a transmedial application of framing, Wolf: 2009 for framing and meta-phenomena, Kuypers: 2009 for frame analysis in politics and journalism, Rose: 2010 for framing and reading, Ziem: 2014 for framing and cognitive linguistics, Jansen: 2014 for the framing of Latin texts, Günther: 2017 for framing and the ancient economy, Georgakopoulos: 2018 for framing and ancient linguistics, Platt and Michael: 2017 for the formation of frames within Classical art and its heritage, and the role of framing in art history, and Matzner and Trimble: forthcoming for frame breaking and boundary crossing in Classical literature and its reception.
[143] Goffman: 1974, 10-11.
[144] Ibid, 21-36.
[145] Ibid, 40-84.
[146] On the existence of the past vs. its representation, see Hutcheon: 1989, 78-81.

'natural' frames that Goffman identifies, the historical frame dissolves on contact with historical materials because it is the 'right' one. What makes historical fiction interesting is that readers are confronted by multiple, seemingly paradoxical frames.[147] Where my analysis differs from Goffman's, or perhaps where fiction complicates his model, is whether or not the historical frame in the genre can be thought of as a fabrication (a frame intentionally designed to deceive).[148] de Groot's argument that historical fictions gesture to something non-existent appears to confirm this, while other historians have come out against the historical descriptor of the genre, claiming it can lead students to wrongly accept the claims made in the story.[149] However, as we will see in Chapter 3, readers are not so much duped as alerted (at the beginning and end) to the distinction between fiction, reality, and history; and yet, like the readers who 'hear' fictional characters in everyday life, what transpires is an overlapping of separate frames.[150] It is the movement in and out of the frames offered by historical fictions that will be our focus, especially the idea of what readers take with them, since this provides a counter to the argument that historical fictions stabilise as 'hybrids' or create a third, 'hybridised' way of reading.[151] These approaches ignore the fact that readers and writers of history since antiquity have moved in and out of historical and/or fictional frames *within* the work, movements that have become central to history, even while the historical frame has attempted to police them from without.[152] While it would appear that readers can read history knowing what it will involve, and that historical fictions challenge this by annexing an inappropriate frame, the situation is more nuanced. Historical fictions are interesting because they make apparent the overlapping of frames typical to the act of reading and writing about the past. More than this, they probe the discourses of 'history' and 'fiction' to reveal the lack of any inherent nature that might set them apart aside from what has been applied culturally through frames.[153]

This is especially visible at the material level. Goffman spoke of the way that framing activities (in our case reading) are 'anchored' in reality, of the edge that connects the framing experience to the world in which it takes place, and of the strange way this anchor exists on both sides.[154] Literary scholars working with Goffman's theory have interpreted this edge as the frame or paratext.[155] The parallel works because paratexts have traditionally been both central to the reading

[147] See Hutcheon: 1989, 14 and Coletta: 1996, 53; see also Goffman: 1974, 39.
[148] Goffman: 1974, 103-122.
[149] Groot: 2016, 3 and 182-183; see also Davies: 2013 and Brown: 2017.
[150] For a metaphysical analysis of this in action, see Kennedy: (forthcoming), 22.
[151] For the historical novel as hybrid, see Stevens: 2013, 20, Phillips: 2013, 224-225, Groot: 2010, 68, Rigney: 2001, 16 and 58, and Wesseling: 1991, vii; it has become something of a common description.
[152] See Certeau: 1988, xxvii on the paradox inherent in 'historiography': "that is, 'history' and 'writing'."
[153] See Ronen: 1994, 15, 29, 76, 85-88; see also MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 12 and Wesseling: 1991, 28.
[154] Goffman: 1974, 248; see also Kuypers: 2009, 182 and Wolf: 2006, 7.
[155] See MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 4 and Wolf: 2006, 20; see also Miller: 1979, 179, and for comparison, Derrida's concept of the *parergon*, defined as "neither work (*ergon*) nor outside the work [*hors d'œuvre*] ... it

of a story, and yet separate from that story, able to comment on it from a higher level.[156] They exist and function both within the storyworld and without it simultaneously, a tradition that stretches from the self-aware preface of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* to the epigraph of Eco's *The Name of the Rose* ("Naturally, a manuscript").[157] MacLachlan and Reid show how this liminal edge extends from the material and moves into the cultural. For them, 'circumtextual' frames are not only paratexts that exist around the book, but also the generic markers these paratexts identify, as well as the type of bookstore where the text is located. The effect of circumtextual frames, MacLachlan and Reid argue, is to separate fictional space from reality, to mediate passage "from everyday reality to the highly organised space of a fictional world," and in the process, to "carry metamessages about how to interpret what they enclose."[158] Wolf develops this, suggesting that frames "not only mark the inside/outside border between artefact and context," but also create "a 'bridge' between its inside and its outside or context," something especially visible with Cervantes and Eco, whose paratexts probe the 'nature' of history/fiction.[159] Wolf goes on to consider the frame 'artwork' (which identifies a work as a 'unit', and not a manual), to reemphasise genre (which provides the codes and norms to understand text groups), and defines the frame 'fictionality' (which identifies a work as indeterminate and 'playful').[160] The result of these fictional frames, at least in modernity, is that the reader "understands the world textually constructed [though likely probable] as a world uncommitted to reality."[161] There are multiple edges, then, that determine a text as 'fictional', edges that exist within and without a story. It will help here to think of these fictional frames occupying the same five categories as those I outlined for the historical frame, not only because this gives a semblance of structure to the typology of framing in fiction, but also because the historical frame and the fictional frame share the same spaces, anchors, and framing methods.[162]

As I argued in the Introduction, the material, spatial, and cultural aspects of the historical frame work in tandem with those that MacLachlan, Reid, and Wolf identified above. Just as the framing activities of reading fiction are anchored in the reader's organising experience as well as the text and its wider contexts, so the historical frame straddles the experience of reading history and its

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disconcerts any opposition but does not remain indeterminate and it *gives rise* to the work. It is no longer merely around the work" (Derrida: 1987, 9).

[156] See Wolf: 2006, 20 and Jansen: 2014, 5-6, see also Wolf: 2009.

[157] Eco: 1980.

[158] MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 93, 39 and 13.

[159] Wolf: 2006, 30, see also the rest of Wolf's introduction and the essays in the same volume for an extensive typology of framing in literature and other media, a survey of the different approaches to 'frames' in different disciplines, an analysis of the multiple meanings of the word 'frame', and a discussion of framing functions.

[160] Ibid, 13-14.

[161] Ronen: 1994, 143; for the novel as 'probable', see Barthes: 2001.

[162] By grouping frames in this way, I hope to clarify some of the vagaries of framing theory, see Wolf: 2006, 2; It is worth pointing out that theorists concerned with framing and its effects in fiction, such as Wolf and Bernhart: 2006; Wolf: 1999; MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, have not traditionally dealt with historical fiction.

production and manifestation in the present. Historical fictions bring these experiences together within the same anchors. Thus the paratexts of historical fiction evoke both fiction *and* history as a frame.[163] The genre of historical fiction, meanwhile, encourages readers through material, spatial, and cultural clues to apply historiographical concepts to the story at the same time as it conducts the reader into the 'uncommitted' space of a novel or play. With historical fiction, readers deal with a doubly strange experience; not only the transition to the highly organised space of fiction, but also the highly delimited historical imagination. Another parallel can be struck between the frame fictionality and the historicising effect of the historical frame. We see this at work in the blurb of Vidal's *Julian*, which is able to suggest that the novel will be a lively and whimsical reconstruction of two "bitchy contemporaries" of the emperor Julian commissioned to edit his papers, at the same time as it is deliberate and urgent reflection on "a crucial epoch in the development of our civilisation."[164] Like fictional frames, the historical frame embeds metacommunicative strategies (framings) for its own content, and especially the contents it frames.[165]

I argued above that the material aspect of the historical/fictional frame is best seen as the paratexts that form a book. These paratexts, whether verbal or visual, contain framing narratives that carry metamessages about themselves, as well as the story they frame.[166] Kuypers argues that "when we frame in a particular way, we encourage others to see facts in a particular way ... filter[ing] our perceptions" to make certain facts "more noticeable."[167] In this, Kuypers effectively describes (without realising it) the storytelling potential of framing narratives, the way they emplot events, characters, and abstractions in much the same way as fictional and/or historical narratives do at the level of story. As a result, framing narratives inscribe various subtexts, or metamessages.[168] In the blurb of *Julian*, the reader is presented with the emperor's key characteristics ("an inveterate dabbler in arcane hocus-pocus, a prig, a bigot and a dazzling and brilliant leader"), a sense of his historical dissatisfaction with Christianity (we are told he called churches "charnel houses"), as well as an explicit, meta-rejoinder of the way history itself is constructed, and not just in the blurb or story ("the alarming notion that behind every recorded historical fact lies a writer – and an imagination").[169] Blurbs reveal the influence of the publisher who, in framing the story in order to market it, also (and perhaps without realising it) contributes framing narratives that comment more widely on how to manage the content and concepts of history, even how to balance them with ideas of fiction. Southgate argued that fiction (not historical fiction) helps popularise the debate about the

[163] This is not always easy to separate, even for analytical purposes, as the two frequently collide.
[164] Vidal: 1964, rear cover.
[165] For the uneasy division between 'frames' and their 'framing' effects, see Wolf: 2006, 5-6.
[166] MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 22-39 and Wolf: 2006, 3-4.
[167] Kuypers: 2009, 181.
[168] For more on narrative theory and the framing of stories, see Liveley: 2019, 1-13.
[169] Vidal: 1964, rear cover.

nature of history.[170] What we see here, though, is the frontier of that debate extending well beyond the pages of fiction to the framing structures that help determine what people buy.

Historical fiction adds another dimension to the framing debate, problematising the binaries that theorists set up when they show how frames determine a text's fictional or non-fictional status.[171] In addition, the paratexts of historical fictions, I argue, demonstrate that, from the lowest level of content transmission to the highest conceptual mapping, there is always an imaginative framing process in effect, both in terms of the type of content made available, the way it is made available, and how it might be received. This runs counter to the work of contemporary framing theorists, as well as Genettean models of the paratext, which both downplay devices that mediate basic information in favour of ones that comment on the text.[172] This stems from an engrained focus on authorial paratexts and frames as tools for interpretation that help the reader correctly decode the text.[173] While the guiding function of authorial paratexts is undeniable, to see paratexts solely in terms of interpretation undermines one of the core claims of framing theory in literature: that is, to better understand literature's "production and reception."[174] It is only when we think in terms of production that we realise interpretation is often a secondary function, or even unintentional. Interpretation neglects the commercial aspects and brand-orientated focus of paratexts, as well as the contexts and nudges of such devices, the way that publishers, in addition to authors, curate the display of fictionalised representations of history and help readers to invest in certain themes.[175] The blurb of *Julian*, for all of its conceptual weight, goes on to frame Rome in terms of "Sex, Power, and Politics," a guilty pleasure to be immersed in, "a classical blockbuster" full of affective presence ("Here are soldiers shouting and banging their shields; people leaping into beds not their own; citizens of Antioch yelling, cheering, intriguing and milling about; sensations, miracle and omens abounding").[176] In adopting the present tense and 'narrating' this short scene, the blurb not only promises, but engages in aesthetic illusion. Such paratexts cannot be studied solely in terms of their

[170] See Southgate: 2009, especially x-xi.
[171] Such binaries are set up, and rarely critiqued, in Wolf: 2006, 27, Rose: 2010, 6-7, MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 58-5, and Goffman: 1974, 47; see also Ronen: 1994, 83.
[172] Ibid., 23 and Genette: 1997, 114-115, 209 and 328.
[173] For example, see Wolf: 2006, 3 and 26, and Genette: 1997, 11; this is a particular focus of MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, who analyse the interpretative side of framing, almost to the exclusion of any other aspect; it is a result of the focus in reader-response criticism (i.e. Fish: 1980, 355) on interpretation and meaning, which itself pays homage to the centrality of language and meaning in linguistics, see Willis: 2017, 29-30; see also Littau: 2006, 10, who calls this approach the 'cognitive fallacy', and Sontag: 1966, 3-14.
[174] Wolf: 2006, 2; a similar claim is made by MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 10.
[175] For more on the commercial aspect of paratexts, which the author often lacks control over, see Bernier and Newman: 2005, and Birke and Christ: 2013.
[176] Vidal: 1964, rear cover; for more on immersion, see Wolf: 2013, 120-121.

text-centred functions, but reveal how industries, just like authors, make use of, develop, and over time provide new imaginative frameworks for the province of history.[177]

Imagination, particularly as it relates to the method by which the past can become an object of thought, does not tend to feature in scholarship on framing or paratexts, and yet the blurb of *Julian* powerfully works to stimulate the historical imagination.[178] In my typology, imagination came last in the cycle to emphasise the role of the reader, but it is also a feature and function of the material aspect. The imaginative qualities of *Julian's* blurb are the end point of a long history of framing antiquity, as well as a new beginning for the reader. In addition, then, to refocusing our attention on production contexts (author and/or publisher), the theory of framing can also help to develop Genette's theory of paratexts by revealing their functions in historical fiction. While still formative for studying paratexts in literature, Genette's theory has its limitations. His case study of classic French literature and belief in the text's primacy vs. ancillary, subservient, verbal, authorial, and predominantly initial paratexts is a limited model for analysing paratexts in popular genres such as historical fiction, where paratexts have become a significant part of the reading experience from start to finish. Furthermore, Genette's view that paratexts habituate the reader to a 'correct' reading cannot, as we will see, account for how visual, verbal, and intermedial paratexts encode multiple positions and function across reading cultures.[179] Genette's theory has also come under fire for drawing a line between text and paratext at the same time as collapsing the distinction between material paratexts and contexts (which he saw as a paratext), for failing to consider the meta-function of paratexts and their role within and without books, and for the level of inclusivity, abolition of difference, and lack of clarity the term 'paratext' (and its variants) imply.[180] To overcome some of these criticisms, I have grouped a range of paratextual devices together. This is necessary for analysis, but should not be taken to imply they all have the same framing effect. Instead, I propose to discuss (rather than reify through typology) paratexts in terms of their opening, *in medias*

[177] Text-centred functions are one of the main framing functions that Wolf: 2006, 27 explores.
[178] Smith and Wilson: 2011, 7/14 also try to bring imagination back into the discussion; for more on the imaginative relationship between reader and literature, see Ryan: 2001, 11; for history and the historical imagination, see Collingwood: 1946, 232-249; Willis: 2017, 30-31 also points out the limitations if such things as aesthetic pleasure are removed from the equation, especially when considering multi-media.
[179] See Genette: 1997, especially 2-15 and 407-408; see also Smith and Wilson: 2011, 8-11, Watson: 2012, 3, Leavenworth: 2015, 41-42; Gray: 2010, 40-41 and 118 suggests instead of metaphors that highlight the initial effects of paratexts (such as the 'canal lock' that Genette uses), we see paratexts operating between 'overflow' and 'convergence', which reveals the nature of textuality more generally.
[180] See Allen: 2010, 181-183, Birke and Christ: 2013, 69-70, MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 104-105, Wolf: 1999, 108, and Barnett: 2010, 3, "the inordinately more astute and prolific inquiry – What is 'it' *not*? – fails to surface"; this is hardly surprising when definitions are broad, as in Garritzen: 2012, 408; it is well known that Genette subdivided 'paratext', calling all those devices "within the same volume" the 'peritext', while the ones encountered "at a more respectful ... distance," such as interviews, are the 'epitext' (Genette: 1997, 205), for the passage where Genette refers to contexts as paratexts, see Genette: 1997, 8.

res, and closing framing effects.[181] A title, for example, can function in all three fields. To evaluate its framing narratives, we have to treat it as separate from the text, yet its narratives are always moving towards, working within, or moving the reader away from the text into cultural memory.[182]

Media theorists working with Genette's theory have arguably done the most to unlock its potential, analysing the paratexts of film, TV, video games, fan fiction, e-books, Renaissance books, Classical literature, and translation.[183] The insights gained can – and should – be reapplied to the more familiar book-format of historical novels, as this thesis will demonstrate. Gray, for example, argues that paratexts not only package texts, but help to "create ... and continue them," affecting viewer attitudes to the whole.[184] 'Text' is defined by Gray as the multimedia storyworld that works of contemporary fiction (notably those that stem from a franchise) contribute to, develop, and revise. I will argue that this idea of paratexts is applicable to the framing of history in fiction, as history also transcends its existence in media, but remains contingent on the content and concepts put forward by paratexts, which the reader has to navigate both practically (to reach the story), cognitively (to understand what is going on), and also imaginatively (to reach antiquity).[185] Along with branding, world-building functions, and the imaginative transmission of historical content and metamessages, the paratexts that make up the material aspect of the historical frame can have the following effects.[186] As part of the chain of receptions linking antiquity to modernity, paratexts act as receiving bodies at the same time as they adaptively translate the past into (or out of) modern contexts and systems of value using a diverse range of communicatory styles.[187] In doing so, they invent traditions of representation. The historicity of these inventions is interesting, but so too is the way they create frameworks of meaning through the deployment of framing narratives.[188] These framing narratives, especially when supporting novels set in antiquity, draw on, encourage, and open themselves up to a dazzling spectrum of intertextual references that enhance, contextualise,

[181] Closing frames have been highlighted as a future area for research, see Wolf: 2006, 32.
[182] Gray: 2010, 34-35 makes a similar argument; see also Smith and Wilson: 2011, 6-7.
[183] See Stanitzek: 2005, Watson: 2012, Armstrong: 2007, Yáñez-Bouza: 2016, McCracken: 2013, Birke and Christ: 2013, Mahlknecht: 2011, Smith and Wilson: 2011, Boudreau: 2011, Fathallah: 2015, Leavenworth: 2015, Gray: 2010, Rockenberger: 2015, Batchelor: 2018, and Jansen: 2014; for a comparative study of paratexts in historical literature, see Garritzen: 2012, and historical fiction, see Adams: 2015 and Jackson-Houlston: 2008.
[184] Gray: 2010, 2-7 and 10.
[185] Navigation is one of the three key features of paratexts discussed by Birke and Christ: 2013, although their focus on e-books and e-readers primarily means that navigation is a practical consideration.
[186] I draw here on Batchelor: 2018, 159-162, who herself is working with the functional categories that Rockenberger: 2015 established with paratexts in video games; Batchelor makes the important point that as well as clarifying the functions of paratexts, it is vital that we consider the themes that appear time and again in the same paratexts across media, which is what I propose to do with the historical frame.
[187] Willis: 2017, 4-5; see also Gray: 2010, 115 on paratexts and value.
[188] See Said: 1995, 20-21; see also Levin: 1977, xxxv on titles as frames, and Maiorino: 2008, 300-301 on how the title-frames of literature "can tell the least and suggest the most all at once."

query, and even dispute other frames, as well as linking historical fictions to the intertextuality inherent in historical representation, to the ongoing, two-way dialogue it creates.[189]

In studying the frames positioned externally to the story (even while being part of it), my aim is to unearth what they may tell us about the value of the historical content and concepts made available for consumption, as well as to investigate how they came into being and what people might make of them today.[190] The cultural aspects of the historical frame are harder to identify (at least compared to paratexts), but their framing effect is no less cogent.[191] The cultural aspects mark history's disciplinary boundaries; these are far from 'given', and continue to be stretched in different directions.[192] We will look at the way history has been written, framed, and theorised later in this chapter, and how this, along with the growth of historical fiction as a genre, has influenced the use of paratexts, their placement, content, marketing, and in particular the way they inscribe metacommunicative strategies for reading history.[193] Framing theory helps relate paratexts to their wider contexts (without treating those contexts as paratexts themselves), while also indicating how such contexts might already be the results of frames and framing processes.[194] The cognitive and imaginative aspects of the historical frame, meanwhile, shed light on how the non-public-facing side interfaces with the public-facing-side to triangulate the reception of antiquity. It is to these aspects of the historical frame that we now turn. For the reader is an agency in their own right, much like the author and publisher and the messages they send.[195] In the next section, I consider the role of the reader with regard to the frames outlined above. I look at how they might conduct themselves, how they might shape and be shaped by reading paratexts (which is a different experience to reading the text), before moving on to think about how this relationship is in dialogue with ways of writing, representing, and receiving antiquity, and what impact the reader has on this conversation.[196] It is hoped that by doing so, I will show how framing and paratextual theories can move beyond

[189] For extratextual reading, see MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 3-4; for intertextuality and paratexts, see Gray: 2010, 31-46 and 117-125; for intertextuality in historical fiction, see Groot: 2010, 173; for intertextuality in postmodern historical fiction and its paratexts, see Hutcheon: 1989, 81-92; for intertextuality in the construction of ancient historiography, including its two-way potential, see Woodman: 2003 and 1988 and 1989, see also Kraus, Marincola, and Pelling: 2010, 4-10.
[190] There are, of course, framing capabilities within the story itself, such as the potential of its opening lines, but these are beyond the scope of this thesis.
[191] See MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 107-108 on 'institutional frames'.
[192] Wolf: 2006, 16-25 refers to contextual and textual frames as 'givens', in the sense that they are 'there' or 'accepted' (and to distinguish them from the codings that these 'givens' give rise to and the reader's cognitive framing activities), however, this assumes such frames are at least somewhat stable to begin with, which, when it comes to history, is far from the case; see also MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 17.
[193] Ibid., 58.
[194] See Maclean: 1991, 273; see also MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 7-10.
[195] See Wolf: 2006, 15-16 and MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 8-9.
[196] For more on the difference between text/audience and paratext/reader, see Maclean: 1991, 274.

typologies and taxonomies to think about the enterprise behind the historical imagination, the dynamic relation between reader and paratext in historical fiction.[197]

[197] Wolf: 2006, 4-10 discusses the static vs. dynamic view of framing, and the relevance of both to analysis.

§3 Reading

"A book can't read itself."[198]
– Geoff Ward

Let us take stock. The historical frame, which regulates historical materials and the way they are read (in fiction or otherwise), is made up of five interrelated elements, which I define as material, spatial, cultural, cognitive, and imaginative. Each of these is the result of prior and ongoing framing activities that result in semi-stable 'frames' that straddle the reader's reality and the storyworld brought about through a reading (for example, the paratexts of a novel, the genre of historical fiction, and the historical imagination). Each of the five aspects has a certain potential for self-reference, influencing the way they are perceived, as well as what they frame (the story) and what it stands for (history).[199] In the last section, we looked at the material aspect, and how its influence stems from the framing activities of its producers, whether author or publisher, as well as the framing narratives that are embedded in paratexts, which themselves rely on the spatial and cultural aspects of the historical frame for their meaning. The aim was to consider the "system of conventions ... the reader has assimilated," that allows them to make sense of history within and without the stories of historical fiction.[200] What remains to be seen is how such conventions are assimilated, how reading acts as "an individual activity within a systemic setting."[201]

Here we will examine the cognitive and imaginative aspects of the historical frame, which I have already equated with its non-public-facing side as part of a reading. As Ward aptly notes, a book cannot read itself. This forces us to consider not only how a book might be read, thus drawing us away from formalist assumptions about inherent textual meaning, but also what the relationship between readers and books might be, including, in the words of Anne Carson, how "reading and writing change people and change societies."[202] 'Reception', or 'reader-response', is the word applied to this type of analysis, and involves "looking at texts from the point of view of readers."[203] Chapters 2 and 3 draw on this understanding of 'reception' in order to consider paratexts from the reader's viewpoint. I also make use of the two other meanings of 'reception' outlined by Willis. The second considers the reception of antiquity within the paratexts of my case study. This classical reception/reception history is interesting in itself, but takes on new gravitas when we consider how it is part of the marketing process of popular historical fiction. The point is therefore to look at the

[198] Ward: 2015, 38.
[199] For some of these divisions, I draw on Wolf: 2006, 5-8, though my typology attempts to maintain greater clarity between the 'frames' we can study, and their 'framing' effects, which in the case of history, translate far beyond a reading of the paratexts and the story that they frame.
[200] Culler: 1975, 104; see also Rabinowitz: 1987, 38-55 and Willis: 2017, 108-141.
[201] Fokkema and Ibsch quoted in Reichl: 2009, 31.
[202] Carson: 1986, 41.
[203] Willis: 2017, 1.

reception of antiquity (the author/publisher's reading of antiquity) within the historical frame from the point of view of the reader. In so doing, I engage the third and final meaning of 'reception' and offer a theory of reception that investigates the impact of the historical frame, in fiction set in antiquity, on the historical imagination, by analysing the communication between the public- and non-public-facing side of the historical frame that lies at the heart of this process.[204] The reader, who carries epistemic, bibliographical, and biological frames of reference, is 'framing in action'.[205] Not only are readers essential for the reading of paratexts, but they also organise them by making use of extratextual information.[206] In each instance, there may or may not be a struggle for meaning around the public- and non-public frame before imaginative reconciliation can take place between the historical content and concepts put forward, and the contents that they frame.[207]

I should highlight that 'the reader', as I have been using the term, is a useful but problematic shorthand. It does not refer to 'real' readers, since a real or historical reading of the paratexts of my case study (except my own) lies beyond the scope of this thesis.[208] More to the point, my exploration of the historical frame in fiction is about the *reading* of historical fiction, how this is enabled, what relationship it has with the historical frame, and what role readers play within this process.[209] My 'reader', therefore, is a hypothetical construct brought about by the messages within the paratexts of historical novels, or artificially placed among them for analytical purposes. This approach is a version of the 'ideal' reader model proposed by Iser.[210] It deviates by allowing for the plurality and idiosyncratic readings of real readers, by accounting for the various types of readers of paratexts (market readers, story readers), and by exploring the range of readers constructed by paratexts, from religious communities to reviewers. It is hoped that by focusing on verifiable paratexts and

[204] These are the three core areas of reception identified by Willis: 2017, 1-34.
[205] See Foucault: 1980a, 196-197 on the *episteme* and framing, Levy and Mole: 2017 on 'bibliographical codes' and their distinction from 'linguistic codes', and Meineck, Short and Devereaux: 2018, 7-8 for biological/cognitive codes and their contingent nature, as well as how they create systems that limit the possible cultural experiences of humans across history; see also Wesseling: 1991, 19-20.
[206] See MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 3-4, 85, 88, and 107 for how readers frame texts extratextually.
[207] For more on this struggle for meaning, see MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 9 and 85; see also Gray: 2010, 30-32, Littau: 2006, 123, and Boudreau: 2011, 27 on how readers have in the past, and do in the present, find their own meaning in a text; see Hall: 1980 on 'negotiated' readings.
[208] Ethnographic models, such as those by Radway: 1984, have generated a viable alternative to text-orientated and implied-reader reception studies, while the history of reading is a growing area, with databases (e.g. the Reading Experience Database) providing scholars with the means of tracing developments in the experience of reading (see Gunzenhauser: 2010, 3-10); for more on this, see Willis: 2017, 85-92.
[209] I avoid making claims about real readers, modern or historical, and thus sidestep the so-called 'receptive fallacy', where critics "try to discern the messages a text transmits to an audience by examining the text rather than the audience," Rose: 2010, 4; see also Willis: 2017, 84-85 and Gunzenhauser: 2010, 7; there is, however, a grey area that this 'fallacy' overlooks, namely the study of the frames that readers encounter – while hard-and-fast conclusions are problematic, frames can reveal elements that underpin the reading process, whether or not real readers see this as such, or whether they are aware of this happening at various levels; the problem with the 'receptive fallacy' is that it empowers the reader as judge over the entire receptive process.
[210] See Iser: 1978 and 1974; see also Willis: 2017, 70-83.

(mostly) hypothetical readers, it is possible to isolate some aspects of the reading process.[211] I thus balance traditional text-based reception (message is in the text) with reader-focused reception (text disappears in favour of radical, real readings), without prioritising either. This is to account for the uniqueness of paratextual reading (texts and readers supporting each other).[212]

The hypothetical reader is ground zero. We will consider in the next section, and throughout the thesis, how this reader has been influenced by historical developments in print and reading.[213] The reader is a constant reminder of the interface between the non-public-facing historical frame and its public-facing side. The latter does not simply 'inject' its messages into a passive audience.[214] As Stuart Hall remarked, consumption is a "*determinate* moment" of production and feedback within the larger process of communication.[215] While the public-facing historical frame draws on or creates new traditions of historical representation and embeds (meta)messages in them, what temporarily concludes this process is a second determinate moment of the non-public-facing side that attempts to decode these messages within the framework provided, along with the broader frameworks that exist around a reading. Some paratexts, such as the intertitles in Waugh's *Helena*, conjure an ideal reader who can make sense of the complex interplay of meaning that Waugh engages with by referring to other historical events, periods, texts, and religious contexts.[216] This hypothetical reader would then arrive at additional cognitive and imaginative frameworks that exemplify the meaning of the story. However, the hypothetical reader cannot always be reduced to the ideal reader. For example, an ideal reader of Vidal's *Julian* (inferred from the blurb and the novel's preface) would be well-read and willing to countenance fictional play around a serious historical topic. And yet, the cover of *Julian*, as we will see, contains a mashup of Classical imagery, some of which is decidedly not of the period. An ideal reader may see this as a mistake; the encoding and decoding may not align. If we consider the cover from the perspective of a hypothetical market reader interested in antiquity, however, then the cover makes perfect sense, carrying, as it does, generic 'Roman' imagery. Using a hypothetical market reader, we can study covers for their 'naturalising' and domesticating effects, whether that involves making antiquity out to be a violent place through the use of martial imagery, or deploying white marble statues and/or bodies with

[211] Reichl: 2009, 20.
[212] Willis: 2017, 81-97.
[213] For an overview, see Enenkel and Neubner: 2004, Gunzenhauser: 2010, Willis: 2017, 85, Mitchell and Parsons: 2013, and Chartier: 1988.
[214] For a critique of the 'injection' model, see Abercrombie and Longhurst: 1998, 5-6; see also Willis: 2017, 82-83 who discusses other version of this model, including more complex ones put forward by Adorno.
[215] Hall: 1980, 129; I am indebted here and below to Hall's analysis of encoding/decoding in television.
[216] Waugh: [1950] 1984, 8.

togas to signify the now familiar space of antiquity through the clarity of visual signs.[217] Such cover images have become 'dominant' precisely because they "enforce, win plausibility for and command as legitimate a decoding of the event within the limit of dominant definitions."[218] Interestingly for us, this 'dominant' mode is under the purview of the publisher, who might have a very different understanding of antiquity from the author, but who still engages in this understanding with the reader. These matched moments between encoder and decoder may only be fleeting, but they reveal the complexity of reading the historical frame in works of fiction.

The hypothetical reader also allows us to consider the creation of reading positions and sympathetic audiences within paratexts, as well as how readers might reinforce or resist such prescribed framing messages thanks to the tools developed through reading popular fiction.[219] Although authorial messages cannot administer a specific reading, we often see the authors of late antique historical fictions encoding highly partisan readings, spotlighting the use of the period for Christian education today, or, inversely, how the figure of Julian and his philosophical disdain for Christianity can be used to reflect on and critique contemporary religious fanaticism and its societal impact (as well as imagine an entirely different, non-Christianised history up to the present). From this, we can theorise – using a hypothetical reader – the negotiation that might lead readers to accept, reject, or adapt what they are presented with, the way they might reduce the grand narratives of late antiquity to something more contemporary and personal. Another position created by the public-facing historical frame is that of the reviewer. Reviews of a novel printed on that novel (or reviews of other novels by the same author) provide insight into how real readers have imagined these historical fictions.[220] We can interpret these as readings and framings, while also considering what a reader might make of them. Reviews are an excellent example of the way real readers have responded to the historical frame, as well as how their accounts have been appropriated for use as part of the historical frame for other readers, who in turn continue the process.[221]

Sticking with negotiation, I have already identified another important moment at the close of reading historical fiction, when endnotes reiterate the 'dominant' mode of history through the use of narrative history and/or references, while at the same time offering the hypothetical reader chance to reframe their personal experience of the story within this historical framework. Closing

[217] Hall: 1980, 133; see also Thaler and Sunstein: 2008, 26-27 on the development of stereotypes and the way they feed into 'automatic' systems of response to new stimuli.
[218] Ibid., 135.
[219] For more on readers and/or fans reading against or within the grain, see Willis: 2017, 92-98; this hypothetical approach is, in fact, supported by empirical studies such as Radway: 1984, who investigated how a group of female readers interacted with romance novels, reading against patriarchal tropes and creating their own categories of interpretation; see also Schneider-Mayerson: 2010.
[220] See Lang: 2010, 156 on how seemingly direct reports of reading are themselves complex constructions.
[221] Marginalia, and other such reviews, provide an important source for reading activity, see Willis: 2017, 87.

frames act as post-texts, reopening dialogue with the story and the reader's self-identification with history through their imagination. Similarly, initial frames can be pre-texts that begin dialogue with the story and its historical reference, ones that shows readers actively seeking to understand what is presented, how it syncs with their existing historical sensibility, how it might be different, what it says generally.[222] As we will see in Chapter 2, there are a number of ways that titles, especially frequently used titles such as *Emperor* (and its variants), have been encoded, both through tradition, as well as by ancient and modern authors and publishers. As a result, there are a number of ways in which the implications of imperial titles can be decoded, where surface and deep readings overlap as the title is negotiated before, during, and after a reading.[223] On one level, therefore, I show the range of possible meanings that readers may find within paratexts through comparative study. On another, I challenge the encoding/decoding model of reception, thinking instead about markets and public contexts. Encoding/decoding remains only useful up to a point. Like framing theory, it tends to prioritise interpretation and meaning, while ignoring the social contexts and imaginative impact of reading.[224] Furthermore, cognitive studies of learning and reading have shown that meaning itself is "not absolute but relative and incomplete."[225] How can a reader ever *know* what the title *Emperor* means?[226] There are many potential meanings, inferences, and connotations. Perhaps a better question to ask of the interface between the public- and non-public-facing historical frame is how ideas of history are repeatedly cross-fertilised to the point where pleasurable automaticity may set in for the reader.[227] How, in other words, the historical frame aids in the development of scripts that lead to the reader instinctively reconciling frame and story, thus freeing up cognitive and imaginative space to immerse themselves in a leisurely, emotionally fulfilling sight-seeing tour of the past.[228] Rather than embedding conflict between frames, repetition and practice may enable an intuitive transaction, authorised and underwritten by powerful traditions (invented or not).

[222] I am drawing here on research into reading groups, and how books can initiate conversation about a wide range of topics pertinent to readers and their identity, see Peplow, Swann, Trimarco, and Whiteley: 2016, 16; see also Willis: 2017, 103; the paratexts I investigate can of course be pre-texts or post-texts for all sorts of conversations with other readers and groups, but this is beyond the scope of my thesis to investigate.
[223] Willis: 2017, 80; for how this relates to dialogism, see Bakhtin: 1982, 276-277.
[224] Ibid., 98.
[225] Reichl: 2009, 25.
[226] This also begs the question of how can the analyst ever know what the reader comes to know by the title *Emperor*. Reading ethnography has been put forward as a possible answer to this broader question (e.g. Radway: 1984, Collinson: 2009), but such results will always remain relative, incomplete, selective; worse, they tend to deny the work's agency in prioritising the real reader; see Willis: 2017, 97.
[227] See Reichl: 2009, 26 and Thaler and Sunstein: 2008, 19-22 on automatic systems of understanding, especially compared to reflective ones; I see paratexts engaging both systems at different points.
[228] See Wesseling: 1991, 49 for how historical fiction has been seen as a 'time machine'.

Let us think about this further by considering the market reader and the transactions they undergo before and after becoming the story reader.[229] The market reader is any reader that engages in some way with the marketing of books and their contents, whether they read them carefully or pass over them.[230] In marketing terms, when a product is advertised, it is not just the product being advertised, but a range of scripted and branded ideas that have a complementary bearing on that product. These encourage investment, certainly, but they are also things to invest in themselves, abstract concepts that are, in turn, invested by consumers in the product as the definitive carrier of these concepts. The title *Emperor* is an advert, but it also conveys a constellation of ideas that stretch from antiquity to modern day postcolonialism. A market reader, once they discover the book's referent (though they may already have a good idea) equates these nebulous ideas with that referent.[231] This 'shortcut' works just as well with blurbs. Thus Vidal's *Julian* not only advertises Rome vividly through its use of onomatopoeia, but the blurb's sights and sounds become coterminous with the imagined landscape of Rome. Waring defines market readers as "tourists, book browsers in the ... marketplace."[232] The tourist metaphor is useful, especially when we consider this in relation to what Culler said of tourists, namely, that they are "the unsung armies of semiotics," perceiving "everything as a sign of itself." A Frenchman, thus, is "an example of a Frenchman."[233] The market reader, in view of the historical frame in fiction, is able to treat their dalliance with the past in the spaces around the story as part of an engagement with the sign system of history. More than this, the historical frame in fiction offers fragments (titles, covers, maps) that, thanks to the reader's cognitive ability to draw on extratextual information to create wholes out of parts, can be seen as representative of much larger ideas, spaces, events.[234] *Julian*, thanks to the way its blurb draws on the idea of the 'blockbuster', becomes a key way to write and read about – and more importantly, to *imagine* – Rome. Imagination and perception, as noted in my Introduction, are as difficult to pin down as readers. What studies of cognitive mapping have shown, however, is that while each of us will imagine differently, the means of processing and drawing on information from mental models remains collective.[235] Mental models are not like a filing system (whereby readers file historical fiction in one place and historical narrative another), but are "holistic" and comparable to

[229] See Bernier and Newman: 2005, especially 150-151, on the 'market reader'.
[230] Willis: 2017, 105 points out that not reading is itself a potent form of reading, with readers who claim not to have read something still in possession of a strong sense of what that text is.
[231] See Peplow, Swann, Trimarco, and Whiteley: 2016, 13-14 on 'everyday reading' vs. 'academic reading', the former of which see readers equating reality and life with what happens in texts; see also Gavins: 2007, 12 on how cognitive approaches have shown how readers begin by assuming the text world refers to reality.
[232] Waring: 1995, 464-465.
[233] See Culler: 1988, 'The Semiotics of Tourism'; see also MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 114.
[234] Reichl: 2009, 35; see also Armstrong: 2013 on the cognitive research that underpins reception-theory.
[235] Gavins: 2007, 2.

collected experience.[236] They can store embodied experience as well as concepts and the simplified nuclei of complex real situations, but remain variable in detail and/or abstraction, which is to be expected when thinking about reading, as verbal narratives do not produce a series of exact images in our minds.[237] Paratextual reading, especially in historical fiction (where readers, who cannot 'actually' experience the past are nevertheless immersing themselves in it by proxy and through representation), once again reveals its worth. Paratextual framing narratives are highly condensed, packed with historiographical content, concepts, and affective appeals that rely on and reinforce prior framing activities, while visual cues (covers and maps) appear to offer exactly what even the story cannot – clarity of the past that can be *seen*, held, and engaged with out of, and within, its own time (thus modelling the experience of viewing ancient statues in the present).[238] Paratextual reading in fiction thus lends itself to the development of the historical frame, which brings together and scripts an experience of the past in much the same way as mental models gather and map the human condition. These scripts are the result of the two sides of the historical frame interfacing. They can be drawn on to relate to new materials, and remain editable.

Market reading, historical tourism, and the historical frame offer new insight into the games that paratextual producers of historical fiction and historical scholarship play with their hypothetical audiences. For example, Polymnia Athanassiadi-Fowden's 1981 study of the Emperor Julian, entitled *Julian: An Intellectual Biography*, is a direct counter to the popularity and success of Vidal's novel *Julian*.[239] Athanassiadi-Fowden's differentiation between the 'cheap thrills' of historical fiction and the intellectualism of history, developed further in her introduction, is more than just an attempt to police boundaries between a professionalised historical reading and a lay or fictional one.[240] It is about more than showcasing the benefits of close, historiographical study of late antique sources and their later deformations and remediations. Athanassiadi-Fowden's title specifically targets the 'habit' of reading the past automatically that I see the historical frame in fiction enabling, with the implication being that her work offers a 'real' historical journey over the tourists' 'experience'. This game of producing "reading formations" does not stop there, with the historical frame in fiction offering the market reader additional chances to negotiate an experience of the content and concepts of history that sets them apart from other tourists and touristic experiences of the past; for

[236] For more on this, see Ibid., 3-6.
[237] See Mendelsund: 2014, 11-15 and Gavins: 2007, 5.
[238] Slaney: 2016, 87-102; for affect and literature, and especially how this has been overlooked in favour of interpretation and meaning (despite the focus on affect in Classical literature), see Littau: 2006, see also Willis: 2017, 9-10, where she outlines how in the early modern period, morality was the focus of reader-response.
[239] Athanassiadi-Fowden: 1981, v-vii.
[240] For more on this reading divide (and how it is less of a divide than often assumed), see Willis: 2017, 90-91; see also Groot: 2009, 250 on how historians have attempted to erect boundaries around their practice.

example, through self-aware historical engagement prompted by metareferential prefaces.[241] The point about market reading is that it continues and develops as it gives rise to a story reading, sustaining the dialogism between reader, frame, and referent. The story reader is reminded and encouraged to refresh their prior market reading at key moments by the historical frame, before ultimately veering back to this category as the story comes to a close, creating anticipation for further historical engagements along the same, similar, or different lines to the story. Note that the historical fame in fiction does not rule out approaches such as Athanassiadi-Fowden's, but in fact encourages and anticipates them as part of the dialogue. Paratexts, as the technological interface for the book, complete with their own protocols and mosaic of frames, combined with a hypothetical reader, together demonstrate how the historical frame "provide[s] the all-important early frames through which [readers] will examine, react to, and evaluate textual consumption," how, especially when it comes to thinking historically, the frame signifies the ever-evolving foundation upon which later texts and readings are built.[242] The interface between the two sides of the historical frame in fiction helps to develop a historical sensibility, coded rules for embellishing and deepening engagement with any future (or previously encountered) historical materials, without actually – or at least without often – changing the content of history.[243]

[241] Bennett: 1985, 7-10.
[242] Gray: 2010, 26 and 46; for technologies of reading, see Willis: 2017, 132-138.
[243] See Willis: 2017, 114-115 on how later readings can provide new rules for an earlier text, contextualising the reader's judgement of the same objective text; see also Rabinowitz: 1987, 211.

§4 Historically

"He had no idea how time could be reworded,
which is the historian's task."[244]
– Derek Walcott

We move now to ponder the cultural aspects of the public-facing historical frame, in particular how these have evolved from antiquity to today in the context of historical writing, historiography, and historical fiction. While a comprehensive account is beyond the scope of this thesis, the point is to draw out trends in constructing, describing, and safeguarding history as they have been established, developed, and turned back on themselves. As we will see, the material aspect of the historical frame in fiction continues to perform the core functionality of these trends, underpinning the reader's cognitive and imaginative historical transactions.

The diverse associations that 'history' has today reveals a deep and long-standing ambiguity in the term – at least to modern eyes – that stems from its literary form and content as practised by ancient historians. This, more than the sense of history as something inherently unstable, which the 'literary turn' in historiography revealed, continues to play a significant role in the historical frame in fiction. I have already noted that the ancient Greek historian Herodotus has been remembered as both the father of history, and the father of *not*-history (lies), a contradistinction made possible thanks to the working definition of history that Herodotus provides. This definition is presented in the proem, or preface, which, although not separated from Herodotus' text like modern paratexts, acts as a type of framing for the narrative that follows, establishing a methodology for historical writing. Here we can identify important trends in the framing of this new 'genre', such as the way Herodotus set out his aims, aggrandised his topic, and determined its relationship to truth. The latter has important bearing on the way modern historical fictions move the reader between different frames of reference, something historical scholarship generally conceals, relying on 'scientific' observation of what actually happened.[245] Over the course of time, the historical frame would gradually separate from the text, but its cultural aspect has been in effect from the start.

Herodotus' *Histories* arose at an important cultural and historical moment, and sought, even more than the Greek poets and tragedians of Classical Athens, to understand the new world order made possible by Greek victory over the Persians.[246] In addition to subject matter, Herodotus' proem is significant as it departs in innovative ways from pre-existing chronicles told in verse and inspired

[244] Walcott: 1990, 95.
[245] Moles: 1993, 89-90.
[246] Goldhill: 2002, 10-11.

by the gods.[247] It characterises the *Histories* as Herodotus' personal, though impartial, "inquiry" (the root of our term 'history') into the affairs of the Greeks and non-Greeks "to prevent the traces of human events from being erased by time."[248] Herodotus promises to speak of the "remarkable achievements" of historical figures, thus appealing to his audience's emotions (much of his material is remarkably fantastic) at the same time as constituting a new historical imagination.[249] He goes on to discern critically between mythic narratives of the same events in order to establish his historical methodology (and himself) as authoritative.[250] Inquiry as a mode of research was already associated with nascent scientific investigation into the nature of humanity; Herodotus adapted it to account for the gathering and evaluation of stories and proofs for the human causes of the Persian Wars. As Goldhill writes, "Herodotus maintains causality [brought about by human agency] as the foundational *problem* of history."[251] The *Histories*, however, are not a clean break from other 'genres' of the time, and in fact rely on many of the formal characteristics of epic (levels of focalisation, flashbacks), rhetoric, as well as intertextual allusion to Homer and scientific tracts.[252] In straddling 'literature' and 'history', Herodotus' proem begins a trend that would be taken up by later historians, who would also go on to imitate (so as to disagree with) his proem.[253]

Whether or not Herodotus' professed aims match with what follows – a narrative full of dubious, often untestable stories or outright inventions lashed together, an Odyssean travelogue of the sixth to the fifth century, many of which Herodotus simply presents, claiming he does not have to believe them – determines one's judgement of the *Histories*, proving just how important frames are, not only to understand what is going on, but also to evaluate how different societies have encoded and decoded what history is in relation to framed contents.[254] While more muted than his successors on the nature of truth in his proem (elsewhere he enigmatically suggests that his entire narrative might be untrue), Herodotus paved the way for a predominantly human-based understanding of history focused on the decisions and lives of individuals of different cultures, a

[247] Here, and below, I rely on Goldhill: 2002, 12-13 and Moles: 1993, 89-91 for their insightful readings; see also Kennedy and O'Gorman: 2015 for an analysis of ancient historiography in the context of historical fiction.
[248] Herodotus, *The Histories*, 1. *Proem*.
[249] Ibid.; Fowler: 2017, 257-258.
[250] Ibid., 1.1-2; Moles: 1993, 93; Goldhill: 2002, 15.
[251] Goldhill: 2002, 13.
[252] See Grethlein: 2011, 148-153 and Kraus, Marincola and Pelling: 2010, 4-5; for Woodman's analysis of this aspect of ancient historiography across the Graeco-Roman period, see Woodman: 2003, 1989, and 1988; as Sir Philip Sidney proclaimed the 16th century in his *Apology for Poetry*, "Herodotus ... and all the rest that followed him either stole or usurped of poetry their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battles [and] long orations put in the mouths of great kings and captains."
[253] Moles: 1993, 93-94; Grethlein: 2011, 149-151; see also Grant: 1996, 10-13.
[254] See Fowler: 2011 and 2017, 252-260, Bury: 1958, 60, Gould: 1989, 8-9, Goldhill: 2002, 16-23, Dewald: 1998, xvii-xviii, and Moles: 1993, 92-121; it depends on whether ancient historiography is taken to be a simple depository of factual information, or a complex literary and poetic construction, which is how Woodman (1988, 1989, and 2003) famously argued it should be treated as, see also Ross: 2016, x-xi.

style that fitted with the performative context of the *Histories*, the fact they were composed to be heard.[255] The *Histories* encapsulate the idea of history as a cross-sectional display of people, cultures, and their geographies, which cannot speak for themselves and must be *performed* by the historian in prose for public benefit.[256] The *Histories* are spectacular entertainment, not entirely dissimilar to blockbusters, by which I mean that, from its inception, history provided leisured audiences with amusement, diversion, and pleasure, but also entertained within its codes erroneous stories, fantastic asides, high praise of individuals, imagination, and invented sources. Herodotus purposefully inserts this content for his audience to inquire into, while also taking the unique step of occasionally interjecting his authorial analysis, dismissal, and opinion.[257] Much like contemporary historical fiction, Herodotus "has it all possible ways."[258] Later historians, as we will see, try to lock down some of these possibilities, but their success can only be considered partial, with ancient historiography awash with various renditions of historical truth, ranging from attempts to mirror the past as accurately as possible, to rhetorical embellishments that claim a greater truth, to an affinity for entertainment and an all-out passion for invention.[259] It is within the frame that authors have identified what historical precepts they countenanced, challenged, or advocated. It is this same frame that allows modern historians to gather these works under a general umbrella, which is precisely what makes them troubling (they do not all present historical truth in the same way). Historical writers, from the start, have asked their audiences to move in and out of different frames of reference in order to conceive the past, whether we look at the intertextual content of ancient historiography and the way historians imitated each other (rather than the past), or at the conceptions of history put forward that marked the bounds of possibility.

Historical representation has long relied on a form and content that problematises equally long-held assumptions about history's ability to mirror the past.[260] Even though later historians, in defining themselves against Herodotus, firmed up some of the boundaries that enable the apparent clash in the modern compound 'historical fiction', they continued to cross their own boundaries. Thucydides, writing after Herodotus, predicated his history of the Peloponnesian War on "using the clearest evidence available" in order to obtain "a sufficiently accurate account considering the

[255] Herodotus, *The Histories*, 7.152 and 2.123; for performance and the focus on human agency over other grand narratives, see Dewald: 1998, x-xi and Goldhill: 2002, 12/29; see also Goldhill: 2002, 27 on the complexities of Herodotus' rhetorical defensiveness in his reporting on truth.
[256] Moles: 1993, 94; Goldhill: 2002, 18-19.
[257] Herodotus, *The Histories*, 7.152; Dewald: 1998, xxviii; Goldhill: 2002, 28; for more on Herodotus' means of establishing authority through narrative, see Grethlein: 2011, 149-150.
[258] Moles: 1993, 96.
[259] See, for example, Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 2.56-64 and 12.12, Lucian's treatise *How to Write History*, and Grant: 1996, 15 on Tacitus; for a detailed discussion of different approaches to historical truth in ancient historiography/rhetoric, see Moles: 1993, Grethlein: 2011, Woodman: 2003, 93-94, and the essays in Kraus, Marincola and Pelling: 2010.
[260] See Lucian, *How to Write History*, 51 for the mirror analogy of history.

antiquity of the events."[261] This "sober and serious" reflection was, according to Thucydides, "composed as a permanent legacy, not a showpiece for a single hearing."[262] Thucydides' aims, made apparent in his prefaces where he performs the novelty of his approach in complex analytic prose and maps its benefits onto the future, seemingly correspond to modern ideas of history.[263] Thucydides presents an objective, dutifully researched, uninterrupted, and carefully judged account of how events actually unfolded for a discerning reader to work through with care, not something poetic (Thucydides attacked poetry for its distorting effects), let alone entertaining.[264] History, for Thucydides, could achieve truthful reportage as well as truthful generalising in the abstract from this material.[265] On the one hand, therefore, Thucydides distanced himself from Homeric and Herodotean models, from poetry, exaggerations, inaccuracies, and "casual information."[266] On the other, he continued to align himself with them, not only making use of rhetoric to magnify and distort the 'unique' nature of his subject and extol its universality, using poetic effect to highlight the pleasure to be gained, but also by gesturing towards the problematic construction of his account.[267] Thucydides famously includes speeches that he claims in his second preface are an approximation, inventions that attempt to cover what was actually said.[268] Since these speeches are presented in direct speech, they appear, to a modern audience, to contradict his claims to authenticity.[269] It is worth thinking here about invention, and especially its role in ancient rhetoric. According to Cicero, *inventio* "is the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible."[270] Far from being shunned, the ability to devise credible tales (or speeches) to flesh out a case – regardless of their truthfulness – was held to be one of the five most important rhetorical techniques to master, and consistently featured in ancient historiography.[271] As Woodman claims, this tradition, which encouraged persuasion through the use of creative artistry, and was used by

[261] Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnese War*, 1.21.
[262] See Rhodes: 2009, xxx; see also Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnese War*, 1.22; as Goldhill: 2002, 32 points out, it is Thucydides' history that is the legacy, not the events as in Herodotus' proem.
[263] See Woodman: 2003, 24 on Thucydides' mapping of his work onto the future, its 'hypothetical truth', and 40-46 for a deconstruction of the assumption that Thucydides can be relied on as a 'scientific' historian.
[264] Goldhill: 2002, 32-35; Grethlein: 2011, 154-155; Moles: 1993, 99-118.
[265] Ibid., 36; Moles: 1993, 105-106.
[266] Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnese War*, 1.20-22.
[267] Moles: 1993, 99-118; Goldhill: 2002, 56; Woodman: 2003, 29.
[268] Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnese War*, 1.20-22; on their accepted place as products of historical thinking, see Phillips: 2013, 226.
[269] See especially Laird: 1999, 143-148 and Wilson: 1982, 95-103, who demonstrate that the use of direct speech, combined with Thucydides' professed aims, is what raises the contradiction for later historians, because when we see direct speech, we expect a level of photographic reportage; see also Abbott: 2008, 146: "What [modern] audiences expect in historical narrative is not the truth but the intent to tell the truth."
[270] Cicero, *On Invention*, 1.9; Woodman: 2003, 87-88.
[271] Woodman: 2003, 87 and 203-204.

Thucydides to theorise in the abstract regarding the true nature (both general and specific) of politics and power, has no place in contemporary historiography.[272]

Where such a tradition has found a home is historical fiction. Much like ancient proems that 'sandwiched' narrative summaries of previous writing, the prefaces, extracts, and endnotes of historical fiction continue to perform an orientating function. They similarly discuss accuracy and defend deviations from – as well as additions to – the record. Historical novelists are championed as the authorising figure behind the narrative inquiry thanks to author summaries, while blurbs have picked up the ancient motif of making "seductive promises" regarding "unprecedented" historical content.[273] Modern paratexts sandwich ever more elaborate inventions that the reader is told relate, explain, or help to relive historical moments. Some of these devices also gesture to the groundwork undertaken by the author, to their inquiry into primary and secondary material. The reader is offered insight into the author's view of the ancient narratives, how they position themselves against this, and sometimes alerted to the intertextuality of the story (whether by notes or epigraphs), to the improvisation of this ancient historiographical tradition. The historical frame in fiction draws on many of the framing practices of ancient historiography, mirroring the authenticating gestures they inspired in later historical works in order to negotiate truth, education, and entertainment.[274] The historical frame in fiction works hard to advocate for an audience and maintain a story that can move between the value-laden frames of 'fiction' and 'history'.

Herodotus' inquiry attempted to instruct regarding "what can be known," a complex endeavour that saw him regulating a spectrum that swung from fantasy to the memory of his contemporaries.[275] Thucydides did the same with historical particulars and generalities. Ancient historians shaped knowledges of the past while also expanding the imagination to accommodate those things that could not fully be known, but which remained 'true' (Thucydides' speeches).[276] Scholars of history in antiquity contributed to this debate, establishing a range of cultural insights. We will encounter Lucian's theory of history later. Before Lucian, Aristotle provided one of the most lasting models for the value of fictional thinking. In the *Poetics*, he claimed history "relates [only] what actually happened," while poetry is "more philosophical and more serious" because it "utters

[272] It did, however, become standard practice in antiquity; Moles: 1993, 106-106; White: [1973] 2014, 6-7 famously and provocatively suggested that 'invention' *does* play a part in modern historiography, which problematises the issue further, as we will see below.
[273] See Woodman: 2003, 30-31 on ancient prefaces as 'blurbs'; we will encounter examples of this in modern blurbs, as well as on front covers, where the reader is promised exhilarating content on a massive scale.
[274] See Kennedy and O'Gorman: 2015, 45-48.
[275] Fowler: 2017, 259-260.
[276] For a detailed treatment of historical knowledge and imagination in ancient Rome, as well as the way we write about it today, see Wiseman: 1994.

universal truths" rather than "particular statements."[277] For Aristotle, history tells only what happened in a "single period of time" and struggled to relate disparate and distant events.[278] As Kenny argues, "to turn these essentially statistical data into a teachable lesson is the task not of the historian but the poet."[279] Aristotle's theory articulated the case for the separation of history and poetry, which, as we have seen, were intricately tied. His position was reemphasised from the historian's side by Polybius, who argued in his *Rise of the Roman Empire* that if the subject was important, poetry was unnecessary.[280] The theory was also taken up outside antiquity by artists working at the other end of the spectrum, on historical drama and the historical novel. Aristotle was seen to lay the groundwork for them, establishing poetry as something superior to history, able to disclose individuality, *as well as* draw universal examples from its contingent facts.[281] Historical fiction thus became the genre that could draw on the truth of history, and of fiction.

There has been a slew of work devoted to the history of the historical novel.[282] I will not repeat much of it here other than to emphasise a few important developments. The first is that it was a pan-European phenomenon arising out of another important historical crossroads (the French Revolution, its ensuing wars, and the birth of the nation state) and lay at the heart of eighteenth-nineteenth century efforts to distinguish literature from history, which was starting to coalesce into a discipline.[283] This is when the historical frame and the fictional frame came into being at a more familiar practical and abstract level, when authors (and publishers) began to move readers more frequently between culturally distinct frames without, as much as within, a story. The historical novel drew on the imaginative realism of works such as *Don Quixote,* the early novels of Sterne and Richardson, as well as historical romances, the swashbuckling adventures of Dumas, gothic fiction, historical drama, and classical epic.[284] Imagination, legitimised by Hume as a "faculty through which reality was apprehended," was distilled in novelistic works and led to the "widespread acceptance of verisimilitude as a form of truth, rather than a form of lying."[285] The result was that imagination, following poetry, became a contested site, at times helping to differentiate the novel from history, and at others revealing their similarity and mutual reliance.[286]

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[277] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451b-1452a; Kenny: 2013, xxvii-xxviii, Grant: 1996, 11, Moles: 1993, 107-108.
[278] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1459a-1459b.
[279] Kenny: 2013, xxvii.
[280] Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 2.56-64.
[281] Lukács: 1989, 89-170, especially 111 where he quotes Manzoni saying that history offered "events ... known only from the outside," while the thoughts, feelings, private conversations and individuality of historical figures were the "domain of poetry"; see also Bermann: 1984, 23, Fleishman: 1971, 8, and Hutcheon: 1988, 108.
[282] See Manzoni: 1984; Butterfield: 1924; Lukács: 1989; Fleishman: 1971; Wesseling: 1991; Coletta: 1996; Maxwell: 2009; Boccardi: 2009**;** Groot: 2010; Hamnett: 2011, and to a lesser extent Phillips: 2013.
[283] Hamnett: 2011, 1-29; Maxwell: 2009, 1-57; Lukács: 1989, 1-88; Roberts and Thomson: 1991, 16.
[284] Lukács: 1989, 89-170; Groot: 2010, 12-50; Hamnett: 2011, 22-32; Eco: 1980, 574-575
[285] Hamnett: 2011, 76; Gallagher: 2006, 340; see also Bennett: 2015, 25.
[286] Ibid., 29 and 135-136; Maxwell: 2009, 11-57; Butterfield: 1924, 1-18;

It is widely known that the nineteenth century historian Leopold von Ranke attempted to divorce history from its literary origins through an empirical approach to documentary evidence, which led to renewed debates over the poetic appropriation of the past.[287] Other historians, such as Thierry, pushed for the use of imagination to recreate the past, while Macaulay wrote that the historical novelist "appropriated" the duty of the historian in a powerful way.[288] No practical workaround was found, not even by the nineteenth-century Italian poet and historical novelist Alessandro Manzoni, who reflected on the impossibility of balancing "pure historical truth" with a counterfeit in *On the Historical Novel*.[289] There was, however, a good deal of experimentation. Particularly relevant for us is the way that these debates not only brought about an expanded and fluid historical consciousness that could encompass both the 'scientific' history made famous by Ranke and the reflective social discourse of history found in Walter Scott's artistic fictions, but also the way in which such debates shaped the boundaries of history and fiction, down to the very paratexts each discourse began to use (and abuse).[290] Early historical novelists, including Scott and Manzoni, were, much like the historians of the same period, acutely conscious of the authorising gesture of source material, its perceived correlation to factual accuracy, as well as the possibilities that creative licence and the techniques of fiction opened up (e.g. interiority and human embodiment of social trends).[291] We see this at work in prefaces, introductions, in the use of illustrations, titles pages, advertisements, footnotes, and annotations. Many of these emphasised the seriousness of history and its potential for moral improvement as a foil to the entertainment of the romance, often pushing readers to engage with the record itself, while also introducing inventions and blurring the line between places, figures, events, and their novelistic representation.[292] Stevens notes that "in the early stages of establishing a new genre (or significantly modifying an older one), readers must be guided on how to recognise and respond to that genre in

[287] See Hutcheon: 1988, 105, Hamnett: 2011, 130, Phillips: 2013, 197 and Wesseling: 1991, 122-3; see also Lemisko: 2004, 3 who provides this observation on Collingwood's approach to history: "If the historian cannot demonstrate any link between the picture that she/he constructs and this evidence, then it will be assumed that the picture is merely fantasy ... historians must use sources as evidence in their imaginative process."
[288] Macaulay quoted in Phillips: 2013, 80; see also Hamnett: 2011, 126-127.
[289] Manzoni: 1984, 81-1, Bermann: 1984, x and 29-36, and Hamnett: 2011, 181.
[290] Lukács, in *The Historical Novel*, theorized that imagination and interiority allowed Walter Scott to "represent social trends and historical forces" (Lukács 1962: 34-43); see also Hamnett: 2011, 82-98 and 146, Watson: 2012, 110-114, Maxwell: 2009, 201, Fleishman: 1971, 8, Hutcheon: 1988, 113, and Adams: 2015, 940.
[291] Hamnett: 2011, 13 and 98-99; Lukács: 1989, 35; Bermann: 1984, 23; Boccardi: 2009, 14-15.
[292] See Manzoni: 1984, 70, Hamnett: 2011, 181, Kerr: 1989, Cowart: 1989, 17, Rigney: 2001, 9-44, Groot: 2016, 16; see also Adams: 2015 on Scott's use of illustrations in the different editions of his work, Stevens: 2013 for additional examples of authors of historical fiction engaging in new paratextual ways of asserting their authority, especially in response to criticism, and Grafton: 1997 on footnotes and their association with research, how they refer readers to the archive, allow writers to refute sources, counter critics, dump irrelevant material, develop a sense of scholarship and authority, self-reflexively and even satirically comment on the subject matter at hand, and generally persuade the reader of the author's credentials; they are just one paratext that finds its way into historical fiction, notably in the work of Scott (Maxwell: 2009, 41-46).

order to establish a recognisable pattern and way of reading."[293] The historical frame as we know it did not come into being overnight, but developed as a result of interwoven cultural debates about history, truth, representation, fiction, literature, and how to mark their boundaries. While covers and blurbs came after Scott, he and his publishers were responsible for firming up associations between illustrations of historical figures, self-aware prefaces, notes, and the emerging genre of historical fiction. The public-facing historical frame was used to distinguish historical novels from preceding 'costume dramas', and gave rise, through its non-public-facing side, to new attitudes to the past.[294] Paratexts were a core part of what enabled contemporary critics to praise (and critique) the genre for doing more for the reader's historical sensibility than history or the novel.[295] They played out multiple historical truths in response to and against the historical discipline (which did much the same).[296] Perhaps the most lasting of these was the suggestion that "fictionalising about history [was] a more honest way of creating a narrative about something which is essentially unknowable," a position de Groot traces back to writers of the eighteenth century, who themselves were relying on the debate begun by Aristotle about poetry that we touched on above.[297]

Presenting the unknowability of the past in the guise of self-evident knowability did wonders for the publishing industry.[298] The sales figures for Scott's work show that readers engaged with the genre on an unprecedented scale, and not just by reading, but also by drawing, critiquing, and embellishing his tales.[299] Readers ushered in an era defined by popular impressions of the past, an era we are still living in today. The final cultural trend for us to look at, then, is how the boundaries marked by the historical frame have developed since Scott. On the one hand, they appear to have dissolved. Michel de Certeau wrote that "historiography (that is, 'history' and 'writing') bears within its own name the paradox ... of a relation established between two antinomic terms, between the real and discourse."[300] Despite attempting to "portray the past in an accurate and a coherent way," historical writing "conjure[s] up the past as a completeness which the representation strives towards

[293] Stevens: 2013, 19; see also Chartier: 2002, 48.
[294] See Duncan: 2003, 95-97 and Adams: 2015, 941; for more on Scott's aims in his Waverley Novels, see Marx: 2011, 192; such framing activities grew so large that Scott himself in fact complained that he "must not let the background eclipse the principal figures—the frame overpower the picture" (Anderson: 1972, 214-15).
[295] Stevens: 2013, 22-23; Butterfield: 1924, 7; Wesseling: 1991, 32-33; see also Adams: 2015, 960, on how reviewers of Scott's works claimed they were truer than any history, because they were true to human nature; see also Hamnett: 2011, 11 on how the historical novel enabled a transference of ideas of history, not only from the discipline to itself, but from itself to the novel, which became more 'realist' in its historicising, confronting social issues through character studies and a richly detailed narrative that captured the inner workings of nation states in much the same way as historical novels; see also LaCapra: 1985, 115-122; for criticisms of the genre, see Groot: 2016, 35; Fleishman: 1971, xiv; see also Mitchell and Parsons: 2013, 2.
[296] Hamnett: 2011, 224.
[297] Groot: 2010, 18.
[298] See Hamnett: 2011, 114, 174, 230, and 260 for examples of Galdós' reception in Spain, Tolstoy's popularity in Russia, Dumas' readership, and Scott's international renown; see also Maxwell: 2009, 5.
[299] Rigney: 2001, 1-15; see also Adams: 2015 and Stevens: 2013; for sales figures, see Hamnett: 2011, 75-174.
[300] Certeau: 1988, xxvii; see also Kennedy: 1993, 1 and 7-8.

but never quite reaches."[301] Certeau, along with Hayden White, also "questioned the neutrality of narrative and argued that it contained much that was implicitly myth and ideology."[302] While historical events clearly happened, philosophers of history have pointed out that the process of historical reconstruction "is about [subjectively] arranging and telling stories, not about delivering objective truth."[303] Selecting material, interpreting evidence, and emplotting events have all been put forward as evidence for the way that history "supplement[s] or rework[s] 'reality'."[304] As a verbal discourse, history, like fiction, is entirely reliant on 'invention'.[305]

And yet, deconstructionist approaches to history have not eliminated the idea that history corresponds to how things actually were; historians continue to use narrative as a transparent means to *show* the past.[306] The divide between 'history' and 'fiction' appears clearer than ever. From the cultural aspects of the historical frame down to the material, narrative history is framed as a truthful account of the past, supported in turn by high profile historians who review these works, a circular argument that suggests ideas of history are less in flux than they actually are.[307] Ricoeur's view that history and fiction are not at odds but "share a common attempt to portray and understand human experience" has fallen by the wayside.[308] Instead, the discourses are being stretched, a phenomenon also at work in the genre.[309] Postmodern historical novels engage in the cultural deconstruction of historical meaning, deploying paratexts to query the realist mode of historical fictions in use since the seventeenth century so as to pose the question "how exactly is it that we come to know the past."[310] Authors of historical fiction working in a more traditional vein, on the other hand, continue to advocate for a melding of fictional storytelling with a specifically nineteenth century conception of history as sources and facts, occasionally with the caveat that at least their fictions are honest in attempting to reconstruct the unknown.[311] Advances in technology and media over the last century have continued to embolden this approach, offering a new "sense of immediacy" in fictionalised histories.[312] It is this type of historical fiction that has led to the genre

[301] Rigney: 2001, 2; Kennedy and O'Gorman: 2015, 51-52; see also generally Certeau: 1988.
[302] Hamnett: 2011, 8-9 is here distilling the thought of Certeau: 1988, especially 3-14 and White: 2014, xxv-xxviii and especially 2-41; see also Hutcheon: 1988, 96.
[303] Sobchack: 1996, 4; Hutcheon: 1988, 97; Certeau: 1988, 9.
[304] See Cowart: 1989, 14, LaCapra: 1985, 11, and Lowenthal: 2015, 411 and 516; see also Hutcheon: 1988, 94 and especially Hutcheon: 1989, 82.
[305] See Cowart: 1989, 17; Wyke: 1997, 12; Groot: 2016, 3; Rigney: 2001, 405 and Munslow: 2006, 79-190.
[306] Hutcheon: 1988, 91-95; see also Kennedy: 1993, 1-8.
[307] Ibid., 94 and 105 and Hamnett: 2011, 32.
[308] See Hamnett: 2011, 8-9 and 45-47 where he summarises Ricoeur's argument.
[309] See Wesseling: 1991, especially 28-58, 73-135 and 178, where he goes into detail regarding various classical, modernist, and postmodern experiments with the genre; see also Roberts and Thomson: 1991, 16.
[310] Hutcheon: 1989, 92 and 1988; Hutcheon is famous for coining the term 'historiographic metafiction' to analyse postmodern historical fiction.
[311] Wesseling: 1991, 73.
[312] Phillips: 2013, 197.

being termed an oxymoron by contemporary critics, creative work that proceeds in "bad faith," a position that harks back to Manzoni's conclusion that history could be corrupted by fiction if they were not clearly separated.[313] What I want to show, both through this short survey and the analysis of my case study in the coming chapters, is that the historical frame has always been a space open to conflicting discourses or means of obtaining historical truth, whether internally, as with ancient historiography, or externally, when 'history' is explicitly presented in 'fiction'.[314] Changes in the historical frame are slow, like changes in genre, and often seem contradictory.[315] This can help us think about reactions to public ideas of history, the way these are coded, separated, only to re-merge.[316] The abundance of historical fictions that make use of classical, nineteenth-century and even postmodernist modes of framing history show that, culturally at least, readers can continue to treat all such works within an avowedly historicising context. In terms of the frame, historical fictions are as much a part of historiography as any formal history, which is perhaps why critics find it so difficult to categorise the genre along historiographical lines.[317]

[313] Litt: 2008, 113; see also Groot: 2016, 3; Bennett: 2015, 25; Coletta: 1996, 37 and 53; Roberts and Thomson: 1991, 1-2; and Manzoni: 1984; Wake: 2016, 84 is one of the few who criticises the 'oxymoron' descriptor: "the phrase is an oxymoron only if history is equated with truth and fiction is equated with the untrue."

[314] In this, I follow other studies that tread carefully between setting up 'history' and 'fiction' as opposites, and blurring the two; see Wake: 2016, 83; Hamnett: 2011, 11 and 49; and Ronen: 1994, 10-11.

[315] For more on genre and how genres evolve over time, see Wesseling: 1991 and Coletta: 1996.

[316] Willis: 2017, 116-118.

[317] For example, Roberts and Thomson: 1991, 1 argue that "the historical novel is not historiography ... it is governed by the laws of fiction," while Bennett: 2015, 26 suggests that Robert Graves' historical novels "both are and are not historiography"; Groot: 2016, 22 on the other hand argues for how some historical fictions "undertake historiographical work" in the way that they foreground issues of historical construction.

Chapter 2

Constructing the Frame

§1 Titles

"Let's say that to tell everything that happened in the first second of the history of the universe, I should have to put together an account so long that the whole subsequent duration of the universe with its millions of centuries past and future would not be enough; whereas everything that came afterwards I could polish off in five minutes."[318]

– Italo Calvino

"I have a new title, maybe. Infectious Diseases in Cattle. The title means a lot of things. You'll see, it means a lot."[319]

– *Synecdoche, New York*

In writing about 'Before the Law', a parable penned by Kafka and made famous by its appearance shortly before the end of *The Trial*, Derrida argues that when it comes to titles, "We think we know what [one] is, notably the title of a work."[320] The term 'work' here should be understood in Barthes' sense of "a fragment of substance" that "can be held in the hand," and which I call a 'book-product'. This is distinguishable from the 'Text', or in our case the story, which is "a methodological field ... held in language," one that engages the reader to create meaning.[321] Titles, however, thanks to their increased prominence as a result of developments in the history of the book, do more than simply identify a book-product. Sustained use has granted them textual purchase through the way they engage in playful, intertextual collaboration and the deferral of meaning. This contradistinction reveals the complexity of titles. "To imagine what it would be like not to use them," is, suggests Wilsmore, "to imagine another literary culture."[322] As both the first line of a book and a memorable handle to grasp its history and provenance; as both the beginnings of the story and the point of origin for its creation, titles are the first second that leads to the explosive expansion of text and meaning. We will explore the prospective function of these literary 'microstructures' here, and their retrospective function at the conclusion of the thesis.[323] This is because titles, while functioning as beginnings, also bookend a reading. If we develop Calvino's cosmic metaphor, titles encapsulate the birth *and* the eventual collapse inwards of the storyworld; their meaning grows throughout a reading, but is reduced and captured once again in the title at the end of the book.

To investigate the prospective function of titles, I use a three tiered analysis. The first level explores the author's role vis-à-vis titles, while the second considers the initial dialogic relationship

[318] Calvino: 1995, 266.
[319] Kaufman: 2008.
[320] Derrida: 1992, 188-189.
[321] Barthes: 1984, 156-157.
[322] Wilsmore: 1987, 404.
[323] Maiorino: 2008, 5.

between market readers and titles.[324] The third encompasses my attempt to read across the titles of my case study. Each level is impacted by the history of the book, to which we now turn.

The "conventional laws" that have "determined and regulated" the position of the title on the front cover are what we are interested in.[325] With titles acting as "initial guides" for the process of reading and making meaning, it is worth considering what material developments in book culture have enabled this to happen.[326] Titling is an ancient tradition, but it has taken over two millennia for it to be standardised in the form we are familiar with. The titles we use today to refer to Homer's epics and the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides (along with book divisions and intertitles) were later additions, applied by Hellenistic scholars.[327] Colloquial titles would have been used in lieu of more formalised titles, though there were exceptions. The need to identify dramatic works in 5th century Athens led to a more systematic attempt by authors to entitle tragedies, which often took the name of the protagonist.[328] Philosophical dialogues followed suit, named after the antagonist, but even these were sometimes bestowed with additional titles, or passed over in favour of other titles.[329] In the Roman era, it was more common for authors to apply their own titles to individual works; however, there were still exceptions, with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* given their titles by subsequent commentators.[330] While formal and casual titles were clearly in use, the former did not usually appear at the head of a scroll. Works were identified by their opening lines, or from the tag that hung from the scroll. Sometimes, titles were found at the end of the scroll, or within the text itself.[331] Closer to the present, titles remained conspicuously absent following the advent of the codex, primarily because works continued to be recognised by their opening lines or *incipit*, often collected in tables at the beginning or end of a work.[332]

It was the printing press that gave rise to the need for identification and publicity as literature became a product of mass production. Publishers moved away from the idea of preservation, of binding works together, thanks to the technology of duplication.[333] The development of the title page was a response to this sudden flood of material, an attempt to individuate works (now in possession of highly moralistic titles), and appeal to growing audiences.[334] Early title pages were different to contemporary ones, however, since up to the eighteenth century

[324] This is against the approach of Cowart: 1989, 206-207, who analyses the title of Eco's historical novel, *The Name of the Rose*, in light of knowledge gained from a reading of the story.
[325] Derrida: 1992, 188-189; see also Levinson: 1985, 33.
[326] Jansen: 2014, 1.
[327] Small: 1997, 11-13 and 33; Whitmarsh: 2005, 588-589.
[328] Horsfall: 1981, 103-104; Small: 1997, 33; Whitmarsh: 2005, 589.
[329] Small: 1997, 33-34; Horsfall: 1981, 105.
[330] Levin: 1977, xxv.
[331] See Whitmarsh: 2005, 590-591, Horsfall: 1981, 103, Small: 1997, 34-35, and Genette: 1997, 64.
[332] MacLaverty: 1997, 176.
[333] Levin: 1977, xxv.
[334] Yáñez-Bouza: 2016, 44; Small: 1997, 35.

the title was only a part of the page. Titles pages were also expected to provide an outline, clarify the purpose of the work, and provide space for illustrations.[335] Subtitles also made a notable appearance. Much like the title itself, subtitles could be playful and often subversive, as when Scott chose *not* to include the subtitle 'a historical novel' in his Waverley Novels, despite the term's popularity with writers of the period.[336] Subtitles aside, even the titles of seventeenth and eighteenth century works were surprisingly long. These 'synopsis titles' fell out of fashion in the nineteenth century (except when used for pastiche), and even today we use the truncated versions, rather than the longer, more descriptive title.[337] The exponential growth of the literary market brought about a situation where short, memorable titles were more desirable.[338] A useful parallel is to think about plays, whose titles were "shouted on the street, represented by crude poster images, bandied disdainfully by critics."[339] They had to be decisive in order to attract an audience.

The use of shorter titles, given by the author to establish a distinct identity for their work, is therefore a relatively recent trend. Identification of a literary work was originally at the mercy of the reader (who recognised the beginning of a work), or a later addition. The importance and use of titles grew in proportion to the material need to sell books, while the rise and fall of synopsis titles – and titles pages in general – coincided with the appearance in the early twentieth century of more familiar front matter, such as the front cover, copyright page, and the blurb, which fulfilled the prior function of synopsis titles. The reduction of the title, and the application of titles at a later stage in the lives of canonical works, speaks of a need to classify and label, and ultimately transmit vital information in manageable portions. This has led to the "discrete, short, textual units" that we find in their prominent position today.[340] The title is a testament to the topographical changes the book has undergone, and to the importance of space in marking out a hierarchy of meaning. As Derrida notes, "The same utterance, the same name (for the title is a name) ... would not have the value of a title were they to appear elsewhere, in places not prescribed by convention."[341]

It is also necessary to ask whose responsibility it is to send titles on their way; who (or what) determines their meaning? While the title has "generally [been] chosen by the author or their editorial representative," titling is a much more collaborative process than we often account for,

[335] Yáñez-Bouza: 2016, 45.
[336] Maxwell: 2009, 55; see also Wolf: 1999, 111.
[337] Wilsmore: 1987, 403.
[338] Genette: 1997, 71-72
[339] Sigizmund Krzhizhanovskii quoted in Maguire: 2016.
[340] Bradley: 2014, 288; see also MacLaverty: 1997, 176.
[341] Derrida: 1992, 189; Genette: 1997, 93 argues that "even a simple opus number can be invested with meaning"; if an opus number can conjure music in a listener's mind, then it possess a similar power to the title that evokes the contents of a literary work, however, the number alone is not descriptive, and, much like ISBNs for books, fulfils a different function to the title (despite their prominence), one more suited to codifying and categorising than one that is both semantic *and* resourceful (see MacLaverty: 1997, 176).

with examples up to the present day demonstrating how publishers can overrule an author's choice of title.[342] This is because titles have to be "circulated."[343] They are commercial, as much as they are literary constructs, with the added responsibility of attempting to "guarantee the survival of [a] book."[344] It is little wonder that Adorno disputes whether the author is the right person to invest their work with a title, or whether that responsibility should instead fall to others. He contends, "Does the hand hesitate to write the title because it is forbidden altogether; because only history could write it, like the title under which Dante's poem was canonized?"[345] There are a number of issues relevant here to the way authors entitle historical novels. In creating prospective titles, which promise the reader something about the past, authors demonstrate the retrospective decision-making and interpretation that lies at the heart of titling a historical novel. On one hand, ideas about what mattered in history accrue over time, providing authors with the language to summarise their work. On the other, book titles accrue over time. When authors draw on these, they advance a tradition of titling that has charted meaning from the Classics to contemporary literature. As we will see, the effect of authors reading back through history/titles to find one that will send their reconstruction on its way has led to considerable overlap between the titles of novels set in the same period. I will read across my chosen titles to discover recurring and pervasive motifs in the representation of antiquity. There will always be an element of collusion between multiple – and often competing – authorial and historical agencies, existing traditions, and between the title and work created.[346] Eco highlights this disparity by drawing a distinction between the novel, a "machine for generating interpretations," and the title, which he claims is a "key to interpretation."[347] *The Name of the Rose* was, according to Eco, one of those unexpected titles that seemed to fit the narrative he wanted to relate.[348] Genette argues this is "by no means uncommon," and indeed shows how the writer collaborates with the title as it appears, producing a text that either "justifies it ... or doesn't."[349] These roles, however, can easily be reversed. I discuss below how the title, when we factor in the reader, has the potential to generate a range of interpretations.

Regardless of placement or meaning, titles, at least in modernity, appear before the work they entitle.[350] Titles manifest themselves in culture long before readers hold the book itself.[351] Contemporary publishing conventions dictate that titles are released before the book, to drum up

[342] Derrida: 1992, 188-189; for more on the latter point, see Stanitzek: 2005, 32-33.
[343] Genette: 1997, 74-75.
[344] See Maguire: 2016.
[345] Adorno: 1992, 11.
[346] Stanitzek: 2005, 37.
[347] Echo: 1980, 541.
[348] Ibid., 542.
[349] Genette: 1997, 67.
[350] Derrida: 1992, 188-189.
[351] Sommer: 2006, 391-2.

interest. Promotional materials mean that the title is projected ahead of the book. Add to this the tradition of referring to books by their title in all manner of literature, and it becomes clear that the transmission of titles precedes the book. Much like the Doppler Effect, titles herald the approach of something material, and they linger after that materiality has passed, appearing notably different. They should be seen as more than a "stamp on a letter ... a signature, but something which travels ahead" of a work, mobilising a readership.[352] Titles are, according to Genette, the "subject of conversation," highlighting their multi-purpose function in society, and how for many, as Grey notes, "the title ... will signify the entire package."[353] It would be impossible to engage with all the books that come recommended, but titles are something readers internalise all the time.[354]

What I am interested in here is how the title helps to generate some of the core knowledges of ancient Roman history that are publically accessible.[355] In the case of historical novels, titles provide one of many public-facing gateways to the past, ones that open onto famous figures and events, and aid in periodisation. As antecedents to textuality, titles address a general audience and mediate between the reader's existing historical knowledge and the historical contents of the story. The images titles evoke rely on reader familiarity with words and themes associated with the past. This process takes place outside the book, but paves the way for an imaginative contract with the book's reconstruction of the past.[356] The foreknowledge readers bring to a reading will vary according to each reader, and the way they interpret and accommodate titles remains contingent.[357] Titles are not definitive. Instead, they are "the most obvious threshold," a "stepping stone provided into the text."[358] Their liminal position, both part of the storyworld and also very much separate, physically, and in the way they broadcast the novel's presence, allows for the relationship between audience and text to be negotiated before, during, and after a reading.[359] Readers thus frame titles, while titles frame books. If we accept that titles travel ahead of their works, however, the process also works in reverse, with titles framing a reader's historical imagination by exposing them to the tropes involved in organising and condensing the past into manageable phrases. With historical novels, this means that audiences have become familiar with historical ideas through reading titles.

Rather than just "an indication of how [the work] is to be taken, of how it is meant to be read," what historical fictions in particular show is that the act of titling is one of the most potent,

[352] Krzhizhanovskii quoted in Maguire: 2016.
[353] Genette: 1997, 75 and Gray: 2010, 2-3.
[354] Maiorino: 2008, 2.
[355] Gray: 2010, 17.
[356] See Calvino: 1998, 153, "Everything has already begun before, the first line of the first page of every novel refers to something that has already happened outside the book."
[357] Genette: 1997, 76-77; Gray: 2010, 2-3; see also Levinson: 1985, 33.
[358] Maiorino: 2008, 275.
[359] Wilsmore: 1987, 404; see also Maiorino: 2008, 2.

visible, and diffuse instances of the appropriation and reception of antiquity.[360] Titles demonstrate how aspects of that past are recapitulated within the historical frame to create enduring frameworks, as with Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, a title picked up by historians, novelists, directors, and game developers.[361] The artefacts inspired by this title (*Gladiator*, the *Total War* series) show that across the genre's multimedia platforms, titles create structural encounters with the past based on imaginative and interpretative tropes. As markers of output, titles act as signposts, directing the reader's side of the frame, while also conditioning *how* they look back. Titles describe, stand for, and stimulate engagement; they are both an illustration of something, and an advert for it.[362] While titles are indispensible in guiding readers, denoting and immortalising "plots, characters, themes, and motifs ... relevant in the archive of cultural landmarks," it is important to remember their duality as qualifier *and* attribute when thinking about how they transmit historical content and concepts.[363] The study of titles brings these aspects to the fore, a reminder that just one word has the power to triangulate the reader with the past and its representation.[364]

Emperor and

"He smiled at the mythical hallucination
that went with the name's shadow; the island was once
named Helen; its Homeric association
rose like smoke from a siege."[365]
– Derek Walcott

This section is about a title that has become something of an epidemic. It is also about the word 'and', as you might have guessed. You might also have guessed, from both the descriptive and connotative implications of my thesis title that I am not going to talk about the Emperor from *Star Wars*; certainly you would not expect a discussion of a contemporary metal band, unassumingly christened 'Emperor'. Rather, you would be correct in supposing this section is about the rulers of an empire. But which empire, you might ask, out of the many such political entities that fill the pages of history, particularly if you had not read Chapter 1. Those that have would, I hope, correctly draw a connection between my case study and the title of this section, and surmise ancient Rome. Readers that begin with this chapter, however, might also expect it to be about Rome as opposed to China, Japan or Napoleonic France, in part due to generic and cultural frames of reference influenced by the place that Rome, particularly imperial Rome, has in Western imagination.

[360] Wilsmore: 1987, 403.
[361] See Theodore: 2016, 1-31 and 135-198.
[362] Genette: 1997, 89-93, MacLaverty: 1997, 176, and Berger: 1997, 155.
[363] Maiorino: 2008, 2; Yáñez-Bouza: 2016, 45; Wilsmore: 1987, 404.
[364] Maiorino: 2008, 3 and 118.
[365] Walcott: 1990, 31.

A title carries an entire range of (in)appropriate meanings ready to be activated by the reader. Genette called them "artefact[s] of reception," manufactured entities that, in their use and transmission by critics and readers alike, have stood the test of time, often outliving the works they designate.[366] They provide a basis for understanding, and can be used to trace the reception history of a work as well as the context of its creation. Titles, though, can also be understood as artefacts that frame entry into the rituals associated with reading. "Just as the words 'Once upon a time—' waft us into the realms of fairy-story," the title *Emperor* eases passage from this world to one of high politics and even higher stakes, conjuring images of dynastic warfare, imperial domination, and deranged autocrats, themes that have been connected in the writing of history since the time of Herodotus.[367] If titles are "keys that unlock a world in our minds," then *Emperor* captures a world apart from this one, a past frequently fetishised that remains culturally and materially relevant.[368] Below, I read across the range of imperial titles in my case study, and analyse how they respond to the world of the Caesars, creating a situation where readers might anticipate a particular type of historical content, received via a concept of history tied to Rome's imperial figureheads.

Five out of sixteen works set in late antiquity explicitly make use of 'emperor' in their title. They are *Emperor* by Colin Thubron, *Emperor* by Stephen Baxter, *The Emperor Constantine* by Dorothy Sayers, *Emperor and Galilean* by Henrik Ibsen, and *The Living Wood: Saint Helena and the Emperor Constantine* by Louis de Wohl. The other eleven, having apparently avoided direct contact with the emperor epidemic, do not emerge unscathed, with another three named after Roman emperors/empresses, and a further three alluding either to the imperial family, the Roman army, or Constantine's 'conversion'.[369] Statistics from Amazon reveal that a general search for 'emperor' in 'Books' yielded tens of thousands of entries, distributed evenly amongst 'Historical Fiction' and its various sub-genres. Of these, the vast majority were in some way related to Rome, appearing top of the list, with their titles/subtitles proudly proclaiming these works were about emperors.[370] Other than the fact that emperors clearly sell books, and that Amazon's 'Historical Fiction' section resembles an imperial necropolis, what can this tell us about the framing of antiquity and how the public encounters Rome? If titles are keys to imagination *and* to the meaning of a text, as Eco and Genette assert, how do we interpret this dependable act of repetition?[371]

[366] Genette: 1997, 56.
[367] Butterfield: 1924, 1.
[368] Ibid.
[369] See the list of titles identified under 'Case Study' in my Bibliography.
[370] This shows that, country to Grant: 1996, 17, Roman emperors continue to play an important cultural role.
[371] See Genette: 1997, 93, Eco: 1980, 541, Bradley: 2014, 288, and Wilsmore: 1987, 403.

One way to approach this question would be, as Genette does with Joyce's *Ulysses*, to imagine how we would read a novel if it did *not* carry its title.[372] The simple answer is quite differently. A more nuanced response requires us to move beyond Genette's rhetorical exercise and consider alternatives in accordance with counterfactual thinking. Wilsmore offers a useful starting point, suggesting that if we reimagine T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* as *After the War*, "the normal reading of the poem might then be an historical one, a local tragedy rather than one read, as now, to be symbolic of the aridity of modem man."[373] Similarly, we could replace all novels entitled *Emperor* with something specific to late antiquity (itself a lesser known period), as de Wohl does with *The Living Wood*, an allusion to the discovery of the True Cross. Equally, authors could rely on keywords more intricately interwoven into the nature of the story, as Brand does with *In This Sign Conquer*, a direct reference to Constantine's 'conversion'. While interesting for the way they signal the religious contents of the story, these titles reveal that the strength of *Emperor* lies in its universality, the evocative way it connects ancient and modern empires in the imagination, weaving connections far beyond the limited representational capacity of a single story set in Rome.

What we have, of course, is *Emperor*, and while it is useful to experiment with alternatives in order to gauge how reliant we are on its specific/general meaning, it is equally important to ask, as Maiorino does of Genette, "How should we read *Ulysses* exactly because it is entitled *Ulysses*?"[374] We may claim it is unwise to judge a book by its cover or title, but because these early frames provide "the reading strategies that we will take with us 'into' the text," it is extremely hard not to.[375] In art, this can mean the difference between viewing a work as either "abstract or representational depending on the use of the title."[376] While literature has different affordances, the titles of historical novels also vary in their attempt to justify and explain their appropriation of the past. *Emperor*, for example, appears to sit firmly in the representational category (this novel will include a representation of an emperor), while others, such as Merezhkovsky's *The Death of the Gods*, is unlikely to include either gods or their death, but implies a level of thematic abstraction. Any title encountered in isolation is going to be abstract in some sense. However, by reading across these titles what we see is a projection of reader preference, predicated on reader investment in the

[372] Genette: 1997, 2; see also Levinson: 1985, 34: "Any title, however 'neutral', will make the work artistically different from what it would be without its title."
[373] Wilsmore: 1987, 403 also provides a Shakespearian example: "Imagine, again, that Shakespeare's *Macbeth* were called *The King's Wif*e instead. The play might well be differently understood"; Berger: 1997, 155 makes a similar point regarding a gay novel, whose US title draws less attention to its theme than its UK counterpart.
[374] Maiorino: 2008, 67.
[375] Gray: 2010, 26; see also Maiorino: 2008, 2 and Berger: 1997, 155.
[376] Wilsmore: 1987, 403.

genre's use of fiction to represent past rulers, which the novels subsequently reinforce.[377] What these titles also show is the workings behind the reader's initiation into an act of reading historically, revealing the process of negotiation undertaken by the reader between their prior knowledge and the title, which suggests they should interpret the novel within an imperial matrix.

So far, we have established the scale of the emperor epidemic, along with the impact this might have on the construction of reading communities. By comparing the similarities of titles that frame the same period, and demonstrating how they are a peculiarity echoed on a larger stage, my aim is to reveal trends in writing and reading about late antiquity (and Rome) that would otherwise be missed if these works were studied independently.[378] The question remains: why choose emperor, what does the word mean, and how might a reader's level of foreknowledge affect their reading? It has been noted how titles are "the most enduring of literary microstructures" because they contain within them the "etymologies of literature."[379] Titles such as *Emperor* are no different in this respect; however, unlike more prosaic titles, *Emperor* is itself the end point in a long etymological journey that takes the reader back to the very period most historical novels entitled *Emperor* represent. Genette provides another way of thinking about this: "Certain terms ... designate at one and the same time the object of a discourse and the discourse itself."[380]

The term 'emperor' is a byword for the sole ruler of an empire, but this was not always so. The etymology of emperor, along with the history of imperial Rome, reveals how translation and changes in political circumstances have added "layers of meaning to the ... source."[381] 'Emperor' stems from the Latin *imperium* and *imperator*, the former relating to the power invested in a Roman magistrate to enact their duties and command respect, and the latter to victorious field generals in the Roman Republic who had "successfully exercised [their] imperium, or power of office."[382] *Imperium* gradually evolved to encompass the geographical boundaries of power, including that of the Roman Empire itself, while Augustus, the first Roman 'emperor' who styled himself the 'first among equals', retained the title *imperator* solely for the rulers of the Empire.[383] As Drake notes, "thus did it pass into our vocabulary as the name for the ruler of Rome."[384] Hollander makes an interesting comparison between titles that are given to people and what these can tell us about the

[377] See Jansen: 2014, 2 for more on how paratexts help to "construct our roles as audiences"; see also Bradley: 2014, 287 where he breaks down the purpose of a title, and explores how they are "places of expectation. They involve readers in a hermeneutics of desire by inviting us to interpret them or a hermeneutics of suspicion as we puzzle over the writer's intentions."
[378] MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 30 make a similar case for how hanging paintings together will reveal points of reception that might be missed if they were hung separately.
[379] Maiorino: 2008, 5.
[380] Genette: 1997, 88.
[381] Maiorino: 2008, 67-68 and 81; see also Williams: 2015, 113.
[382] Drake: 2000, 37; see also Morley: 2010, 17.
[383] Morley: 2010, 13-17.
[384] Drake: 2000, 37.

way a title of a work might similarly "direct certain forms of behaviour toward its holder."[385] *Emperor* is comparatively unique, not only in demonstrating this process at work, but also by *being* an epithet. Books entitled *Emperor* require the reader to imagine those who held absolute power. *Emperor*, however, is also *entitled* to talk about this past thanks to the epithet's presence in ancient historical writing, panegyric, and especially on epigraphic inscriptions that, from the time of Augustus on, marked the reach of imperial presence across society.[386] Here we see a clear example of how the title can be both an illustration of something, and an advert for it. The title *Emperor*, with its ancient roots, seems to provide an authentic snapshot of Roman imperial majesty at the same time as it advertises Rome through its emperors. The title is illustrative of the centrality of the emperor (his name and titles) to both ancient and modern visual culture.

Another important root for 'emperor' is the ability to command, inherent in the word *imperium*, which developed into ideological dominion over subdued people, consolidated linguistically in the nineteenth century term 'imperialism'.[387] The exercise of power that *imperium* implies sowed the seeds for the concept of supreme power exercised by a single ruler of a one-party state. During the first century BCE, Virgil wrote that such a transition was prophesised. The Romans would extend their command "beyond the stars, beyond the yearly path of the sun, where Atlas holds on his shoulder the sky all studded with burning stars and turns it on its axis."[388] Virgil shared his vision of The Eternal City and its destiny: "Your task, Roman, and do not forget it, will be to govern the peoples of the world in your empire."[389] This task specifically fell to the emperor and his associates; he was "personally responsible for [the] well-being [of the empire]."[390] Historical fictions entitled *Emperor* marketise this idea of absolute power invested in an individual. Regardless of how limited it might have been in practice, they sell it to audiences interested in how it was exercised.[391] Connected to this, *imperator* reveals the long-held association between emperor and military.[392] Contemporary novels entitled *Emperor* routinely deal with martial matters, which only reinforces the association, enabling *Emperor* to become a byword for military historical fiction.

Alongside military power, the title *Emperor* evokes a sense of ceremony and decadence, while at the same time placing emphasis on single, autocratic rule. In late antiquity, emperors began to rely heavily on court ceremonials, which became ever more elaborate as emperors "sought ... to

[385] Hollander: 1975, 214.
[386] See Bodel: 2001, 6-10; see also Nelis-Clément and Nelis: 2013, 318-321.
[387] Williams: 2015, 112-113; see also Clark: 2011, 11.
[388] Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book 6, 780-800.
[389] Ibid., 850-560.
[390] Morley: 2010, 118.
[391] See Heather: 2005, 100-140.
[392] Drake: 2000, 37.

be seen as different from those who served him."[393] Ceremonies and religious practices show that emperors fashioned themselves as semi-divine figures, set apart from others. This singling out of emperors was heavily criticised by later writers, who saw in the adoption of royal customs a drive towards decadence and despotism.[394] The use of the singular 'emperor' in the titles of historical novels connects to this seductive idea, promising a narrative driven by a single, charismatic figure.[395] Such insistence cuts across the more complex reality of joint imperial rule, which is especially noticeable in late antiquity after the emperor Diocletian reorganised the empire as a tetrarchy, ruled by two senior and two junior emperors. Although these complexities are often apparent in the story, the use of *Emperor* demonstrates that adherence to historical actuality is far less important in initial frames than faithfulness to a concept of Roman history driven by authoritarian and frequently tyrannical rulers, ones that abound in fiction set in both the early and late empire.

Regardless of how many emperors there were, such figures were on show as the benefactor of empire, present in statues and on coins, visible on inscriptions, majestic in ceremony.[396] Novels entitled *Emperor* work within this tradition of imperial representation, contributing to the "aura of invincibility" (even immortality) that such figures relied upon during and after their reign.[397] The idea that the empire and emperor were divinely ordained, with Jupiter promising Rome power "without limits of time or space" may seem trite with hindsight.[398] But considering the ramifications of the emperor epidemic, it is clear that emperors continue to be immortalised. The reception of the Roman Empire remains very much alive, with the titles of thousands of works drawing on and making familiar concepts that were close to the hearts of elite Roman authors, many of whom separated their historical accounts according to the reigning emperor.[399] Historical novels that bear the title *Emperor* encourage readers to perceive the history of antiquity through the lens of its rulers. When reading the title *Emperor*, readers sympathise with the concerns of elite Roman authors, remembering what mattered to those with a stake in the empire. "Tacitus, thinking of Rome, thinks of its emperor," writes Grant in his introduction to the *Annals*.[400] In perpetuating this type of approach, novels entitled *Emperor* maintain imperial dominion over the imagination.

Much of the above analysis requires prior understanding of etymology, historical developments, and reception, all of which can be counted as extratextual knowledge. Such

[393] Potter: 2013, 53.
[394] Ibid., 70-71.
[395] This is exactly what Thubron, Baxter, Sayers, Ibsen, and de Wohl do by focusing on fourth-century rulers (Constantine and Julian) who actually managed to unite the empire under their rule.
[396] For more on the emperor's image in antiquity, see Morley: 2010, 118.
[397] Potter: 2013, 8.
[398] Morley: 2010, 13.
[399] Suetonius' *The Twelve Caesars* is perhaps the best example of this, but Tacitus and Ammianus Marcellinus also divide their historical works thematically according to which emperor (or empress) was in power.
[400] Grant: 1996, 17.

knowledge will vary, meaning that each pre-reading will have a different inflection. The situation, however, is not as simple as it might seem, with each reader applying a body of knowledge to the title *Emperor*. Titles generate feedback loops, not only during a reading, but also before, between what a reader already knows and the intertextual allusions the title activates. Barthes wrote that "the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas."[401] Borges explored a similar idea when he said that "As a matter of fact, language is a system of quotations."[402] Titles, more than any other signifier, function implicitly *and* explicitly in this manner. All titles can be considered quotations without inverted commas because they are either lifted from the work they append to, refer to a cultural, literary, or in our case, historical phenomenon, or directly quote another work. How far these unmistakable "literary echoes" resonate with a reader remains dependent on each reader's frame of reference.[403] Thus a reader may recall the famous comic book character John Constantine when reading the name Constantine in the title of a novel. Other framing devices will challenge this reading (such as the word 'Emperor' in Dorothy Sayers' *The Emperor Constantine*), but the point remains that in titling a piece of fiction, much like when putting quotation marks around a word, new contexts of association are opened up.[404] What the Constantine example demonstrates is that it is entirely possible for readers to bring to a novel entitled *Emperor* a multitude of meanings, which the historical novel then helps to process, sort through, prioritise, and select.[405] Readers read *Emperor* within a nexus of competing, historically orientated facts and opinions relating to the rulers of Rome, each of which adds meaning to the newly encountered novel, and makes it more likely that authors will use similar titles to buttress their own work.[406] Such repetition provides "indirect support ... plus the prestige of a cultural filiation."[407] In doing so, however, each additional work entitled *Emperor* "diverts the other title under the cover of a homonym," usurping the term and transferring it from one system of relations to another.[408] The act of citation means that subsequent *Emperors*, while sharing the same spelling and format, revise readerly understanding of any predecessors, along with extratextual knowledge of emperors. The framing potential of a title shows that it has both an anterior and posterior effect on meaning because readers make sense of it "through the frames offered by other

[401] Barthes: 1984, 160.
[402] Borges quoted in Maiorino: 2008, 237.
[403] Maiorino: 2008, 2.
[404] See Ibid., 174; see also Eco: 1980, 542-543, where he explores how a reader might have "previously made God only knows what other choices" in terms of a title's meaning before they read the work.
[405] For more on intertextuality and its relationship to paratextuality, see Gray: 2010, 117-118.
[406] MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 101; see also Maiorino: 2008, 221.
[407] Genette: 1997, 91.
[408] See Derrida: 1992, 183.

texts."[409] This effect begins independent of the story, but can become interdependent following the reading process. In receiving and responding to the emperor epidemic, readers are actively involved in the ongoing renegotiation of their relationship to Rome and its emperors.

The title's intertextual potential also helps to answer the question of why authors repeatedly choose to draw on popular historical terms to label their work. *Emperor* is a broadly inclusive title, wide enough in scope to attract new readers, while also appealing to readers who have previously engaged with ancient Rome through the introductory frame of emperors by rewarding their foreknowledge.[410] The greater the number of works that activate this frame of reference, the more *Emperor* becomes synonymous with ancient Rome, facilitating the creation of a network of powerful associations with the past.[411] We have already seen how *Emperor* responds directly to elite Roman ways of making sense of their world. However, as Lowenthal argues, "Without adaptive reuse most artefacts and memories would soon perish."[412] What readers *see* (both textually and imaginatively) when they read *Emperor* is the adaptive reuse of a long-standing tradition, reduced to a keyword that authors make use of to signpost the historical content, context, and methodology of their work, and which readers draw on to navigate their historical imagination.[413] Much like Calvino's invisible city Clarice, one that has "several times ... decayed, then burgeoned again, always keeping the first Clarice as an unparalleled model of every splendour," so *Emperor* relies on Rome's splendour while at the same time representing an incursion: "the more the new city settled triumphantly into the place and the name of the first Clarice, the more it realized it was ... destroying it."[414] *Emperor* is a modern artefact overlaying an ancient tradition; it determines what readers remember, highlighting the desire "to reconstruct through [it] a city of which no one knew anything now."[415] Calvino pushes his metaphor further, suggesting there was no original Clarice, and that the "The order of the eras' succession has been lost."[416] While ancient Rome certainly existed, it seems beyond doubt that the importance of Roman emperors is read (and written) back after the fact because of their topographical value in the historical frame of works set in antiquity. For many readers, these emperors will be the 'originals' – a foundation upon which to reconstruct Rome.

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[409] Gray: 2010, 31; see also MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 88.
[410] Maclean: 1991, 275; see also Maiorino: 2008, 77, on reader familiarity with the meaning of *Ulysses*.
[411] Smith and Wilson: 2011, 7; see also Theodore: 2016, 155 who makes a similar case for Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* vis-à-vis late antiquity, and Boudreau: 2011, 27 who shows *Dracula's* connection to vampire.
[412] Lowenthal: 2015, 514.
[413] See MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 3, who discuss how titles affect what we *see* in art, Bradley: 2014, 287, for how titles are essential to a work's reception, and Lowenthal: 2015, 571 on how history is flattened out.
[414] Calvino: 1997, 96.
[415] Ibid., 97.
[416] Ibid.; see also Theodore: 2016, 42 who argues that "The present is a multi-temporal representation, the ancient object layered with meanings foreign, sometimes alien, to its original context."

It is now time to look at the supplementary words that accompany emperors in their entourage. To start with the shortest titles, *Emperor* (Thubron), and *Emperor* (Baxter) appear to have the least pomp and ceremony about them. They present themselves in isolation, and can be read as suggestive of the political, legal, and ideological seclusion of emperors. In lacking the definite article, these titles seem to say that their story will offer what it means to be an emperor.[417] They sell themselves on the power-in-theory of emperors, while also conveying the impression that they will provide insight into a specific emperor (we are dealing with a both-and logic, where *Emperor* supplies both the concept of emperors, and an example).[418] In their brevity, these titles take the reader from the case-study of this or that emperor to a paradigm for the rulers of Rome. That being said, Thubron and Baxter's titles may not be as autonomous or solitary as they seem. While *Emperor* may appear in isolation, it is unlikely to be read in isolation. Since novels, particularly historical novels, rely on conflict, either between characters or themes, the limited conflict inherent in the word *Emperor* gives way to great *potential* conflict between an emperor *and* something else: rivals, usurpers, 'barbarians', even their own inner thoughts – the central focus of Thubron's novel. *Emperor* can therefore be taken as the starting point in a conflict, with a silent 'and' connecting the title to the story and other available paratexts. Thus, Thubron and Baxter's title gives rise to a universality of imperial presence at the same time as playing the role of an opening line that sets the scene for what will follow. An *Emperor*, it seems, is never without an entourage.

When that entourage is visibly larger, the title carries additional baggage, as the use of 'and' in *Emperor and Galilean* demonstrates. This title will likely mean more to readers with a historical background who can identify the opponents in the play (the pagan emperor Julian and Christ), but they are not the only ones who may receive messages from the title. *Emperor and Galilean* draws on the legacy of 'tragic' titles, long-established in drama and subsequently adopted by novelists.[419] "*Tristan and Isolde*, printed in Gothic letters, is like a black flag flying from the bow of a sailing ship."[420] Adorno's allusion here to the Greek hero Theseus, who brought about his father's suicide when he did not raise a white flag on his ship, implying he had fallen in his quest to destroy the Minotaur, summarises the experience of tragic titles. The inevitable fall will occur only because of the interaction between the titular characters. A reader may anticipate this, much like Theseus' father when he sees the black flag. Before the reader opens *Emperor and Galilean* – or witness it on stage – they may acquire an inkling of the conflict between two powers; specifically, between

[417] See Maiorino: 2008, 51 for an exploration of why Montaigne wrote "*Essais*, not *Les Essais*."
[418] See Bennett: 2015, 37-38 on the both-and logic in relation to literature.
[419] See Levin: 1977, xxxi and Adorno: 1992, 5.
[420] Adorno: 1992, 5.

imperial authority and the Church, which may or may not be obvious from 'Galilean'.[421] The use of 'and' further testifies to the thematic duality of titles. Adorno suggests that 'and' "permits everything to be connected with everything else."[422] We saw how this works with the silent 'and' connecting the paratext/story. It is even more marked in titles such as *Emperor and Galilean*. There is a reason the title does not read *Emperor or Galilean*, despite the fact many late antique sources would encourage such a juxtaposition, seeing, as they did, Julian foolishly setting himself against Christ. Such a title would fail to acknowledge the complexities of the representation of Julian's character. Raised a Christian, he converted to paganism and eventually championed a new type of Christo-paganism. It is thanks to both – 'paganism' (*Emperor*) *and* Christianity (Galilean) – that Julian comes into clearer focus. According to Levin, when "two related entities are yoked together by a connective *and*, which becomes a contra in the dialectical trial of strength between them," they "become a union of opposites."[423] A prime example of the both-and logic of titles, the word 'and' here anticipates the syncretism and progeny between *Emperor and Galilean*.

In Sayers and Wohl's titles (*The Emperor Constantine* and *The Living Wood: Saint Helena and the Emperor Constantine*), we glimpse the full imperial entourage. Unlike titles that name an emperor without referring to their emperorship, or those that refer generally to emperors, these titles offer greater clarity, a trade-off bought by the inclusion of the definite article. Sayers and Wohl refer the audience to a specific imperial figure and, by extension, a period and genre of writing. As such, they are useful for investigating "how, and with what gestures" the title "does the directing."[424] Sayers and Wohl's titles lean more towards biography and historical writing than those already encountered. This is not by accident, since the producers (author and publisher) of fictional biography consistently borrow from legitimised forms of literature in order to frame their work as authentic. Drawing on the titling conventions of biography and historiography is just one instance of this appropriation; an important one, since it exposes the title's rhetorical impetus. *Emperor Constantine* would, for example, have a different rhetorical thrust to *The Emperor Constantine*. It would imply a casualised acquaintance, the summoning of a name from memory; in other words, a mention in passing. The introduction of the definite article in the title (*The Emperor Constantine*) instead makes use of a particular style of writing to present, unequivocally, a portrait of the emperor.[425] The title's rhetoric thus contributes to the formation of a biographical frame.

[421] Maiorino: 2008, 125-126 explores the antagonistic relationship between the literary title as text and the live performance of a theatrical play; each explores the limits of the other.
[422] Adorno: 1992, 5.
[423] Levin: 1977, xxxi.
[424] Hollander: 1975, 225.
[425] For more on the use of 'a', 'an' and 'the' in titles, see MacLaverty: 1997, 173-175.

In The Name of the Emperor

"What's in a name?"[426]
– William Shakespeare

Continuing with our imperial theme, I want to consider titles that stipulate a name, in particular *Helena*, by Evelyn Waugh and *Julian*, by Gore Vidal. By dropping the definite article and references to imperial position, these titles activate a different set of meanings. Genette argued "identification is the most important function of the title."[427] This is in order to reference a work of art. The titles listed above enable me to identify a work, as well as cite appropriate passages. They also, however, identify *someone*. Naming works after fictional and/or historical protagonists was established, as we saw above, in antiquity, with casual and formalised titles referring to the characters of epic, drama, and philosophical works.[428] Another useful framing comparison is to the chapter titles of Roman biographical writing, which listed the names of great statesmen. Drawing on Greek precedents, Plutarch was the first to hold up the *Lives* of Roman generals and emperors as "case studies in political behaviour, set out to be considered and evaluated by the reader," while his contemporary Tacitus developed the genre further by including historical and topographical details in his *Agricola*.[429] Later, Suetonius offered his readers the lurid and thrilling *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* subdivided by emperor, while in the fourth century the Christian historian Eusebius provided "an uneasy mixture of panegyric and narrative history" in his *Life of Constantine*.[430] It is important to note that these biographies were not "psychological stud[ies]," nor were they 'histories' as understood by ancient or modern historians.[431] Rather, in Plutarch's words, "The experience is like nothing so much as spending time in their company and living with them: I receive and welcome each of them in turn as my guest so to speak, observe 'his stature and his qualities'."[432]

Waugh and Vidal's titles similarly identify a figure of historical interest, and engage the tradition of recreating the past through the lens of fictionalised biography. Such titles permit a level of leeway in historical reconstruction, of favourable presentation allowing the authors to use *Helena* and *Julian* as a vehicle for their own defence and critique of Christianity respectively, focalising the past through the stances adopted by their protagonists. Rather than themes or events revealing the fullness of history, there is a focus on personality and character determining and directing the

[426] Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II, ii, 1-2.
[427] Genette: 1997, 79-80.
[428] Wilsmore: 1987, 403-404; see also Horsfall: 1981, 103-104 and Small: 1997, 33.
[429] See Stadter: 1990, xvii and Grant: 1996, 8.
[430] Cameron and Hall: 1999, 1 and 46.
[431] See Grant: 1996, 19 and Stadter: 1990, xviii-xxv.
[432] Plutarch, *Aemilius*, 1.1-3.

historical imagination.[433] These titles suggest that the past can be understood as a story with a central protagonist, whose journey defines the limits and meaning of the world around them, much as in epic and tragedy. Waugh and Vidal, like Plutarch, are supremely interested in the behaviour and world-wide historical ramifications of Helena and Julian, hence Waugh's focus on Helena's 'discovery' of the True Cross and its meaning for Christianity, and Vidal's interest in Julian's failed attempt to stem the rise of Christianity and change the course of history.[434]

To understand how these titles signal a more comprehensive approach to history, we need to look at what other theories of character underpin their signifying strategies. In Chapter 1, I touched on Lukács' suggestion that for characters in historical novels "to appear before us already complete," the social context of the historical setting had to be "portrayed in breadth and depth."[435] Scott was credited with developing a clear sense of character, removed from the romanticised portrayal of manners found in his predecessors.[436] Fleishman, meanwhile, argued that if a historical period was distilled in an individual, then novels that represented such individuals could embody "symbolic truths."[437] The point of the historical novel was not to create rounded characters, but to use them to explore the "prehistory of the present."[438] Onomastic titles, which Scott made full use of, were understood to "chart a destiny," not so much for the eponymous character, but of their times.[439] Scott and later writers made full use of their fictional characters to observe key historical events, show history as process, and make "what happened ... more comprehensible."[440] What Waugh and Vidal do is something different again. While their titles lie in the shadow of these developments, they also claim to present actual historical figures. And not just any figure, but royalty, a trope borrowed from the titling of tragedies where, unlike the "generalised" nature of comedy, "the tragic character is individualized."[441] Individuality, however, did not translate into interiority of character in ancient drama. The psychology of character became a facet of later productions. It also became a defining feature of the novel thanks to the innovations of Flaubert, Balzac, and Dickens, many of who made use of onomastic titles. Their novels "contributed to a deeper comprehension of humanity" and paved the way for associations between onomastic titles and a study of the emotional and mental state of characters past and present.[442]

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[433] Stadter: 1990, xi-xii.
[434] See Ibid., xxv for more on Plutarch's approach.
[435] Lukács: 1989, 312-313.
[436] Groot: 2010, 22.
[437] Fleishman: 1971, 12.
[438] Lukács: 1989, 53; see also Wesseling: 1991, 41.
[439] Maiorino: 2008, 35.
[440] Eco: 1980, 574.
[441] Levin: 1977, xxvi-xxvii; see also Berger: 1997, 161-162.
[442] Hamnett: 2011, 179; see also MacLaverty: 1997, 185.

Shakespeare once asked "What's in a name?," to which Levin replied "when that name is a title, probably more than in any other kind of name there is."[443] Not only do the onomastic titles of historical novels retain and advance longstanding conceptions of character vis-à-vis the reconstruction and comprehension of antiquity, they also help the critic chart the reception of historical figures and the novels baptised under their name. It is extremely difficult to separate out these destinies owing to the power onomastic titles exert as "intertextual 'guides'."[444] In referring to the idea of character, a historical figure, *and* the work of art, they create a situation where one evokes all three. In the process, the names of historical figures become charged with new meaning as fresh contexts of interpretation are established. Vidal's *Julian* may be Vidal's Julian, but the title, by acting as "the linguistic form of reminiscence," recalls both the real Julian, and his extensive, tragic afterlife in cultural memory, his potential to challenge historical causation and postulate alternatives.[445] The paratexts and story of Vidal's novel will guide the reader through this material, while at the same time adding to it, further enhancing the emperor's characterisation in literature as an enlightened rebel.[446] Much as "Joyce's *Ulysses* is based on a name that itself has become the footprint of an epic map," so *Julian* has become a potentially tragic microtale.[447]

To bring our discussion of emperors to a close, I want to return to the question of why they overwhelmingly dominate the headlines of fiction set in (late) antiquity. Nietzsche offers the aphorism "*You can explain the past only by what is most powerful in the present*," suggesting the past, being inherently unknowable, requires a point of comparison that resonates with different audiences.[448] As we saw with named and unnamed emperors, such points can originate in the past, wielding power in their own time. What Nietzsche argues, though, is that these points primarily require power in the present if they are to act as explanatory models. Titles achieve this because they are "instrument[s] of transfer that keep textuality at once open and topical."[449] Novels named after emperors retain a place for them in the historical imagination, allowing them to endure.[450] In a similar way, titles working in the unnamed imperial tradition "trigger a chain of associations" that ask readers to relate their collective knowledge of modern political leaders and recent empires to Rome.[451] Journalists who compare US President Donald Trump to Roman emperors in the titles of

[443] Levin: 1977, 38.
[444] Gray: 2010, 32.
[445] Barthes: 1980, 58.
[446] See Maiorino: 2008, 136 where he explores the compound nature of the literary and performed Hamlet.
[447] Ibid., 101 and 76-136.
[448] Nietzsche: 1980, 37.
[449] Maiorino: 2008, 231.
[450] See Potter: 2013, 1-3 on Constantine's contemporary visibility.
[451] Theodorie: 2016, 185-186.

their articles disclose the workings behind this process.[452] Imperial cognomina have power in the present because they are kept alive by repeated use in politics and popular culture. What the tabloid articles show is that the content of Roman history is considered to be delimited by authoritarian figures. This, in turn transmits a concept of history determined by the cult of personality, which, while historically contingent, allows for potent trans-temporal comparison.

Subject(ive) Titles

"One begins by choosing a title, in order to assure oneself that one has a subject: for a title is a kind of substitute or shadow of a subject."[453]

– T.S. Eliot

I would like to move on from titles that focus on the great (wo)man tradition of historical writing to think about titles that signal their subject by alternative means. Derrida wrote that the "entitling event confers upon the text its law," meaning the title regulates the actions of the book's contents, and arbitrates between them.[454] In doing so, the titles of historical novels orientate readers in relation to the work, and also to the past it represents. Subject titles offer practical, cultural, and historical signposts, allowing readers to navigate the story's represented past, note decisive landmarks, and construct a memory of these milestones.[455] Rigney has highlighted how important it is to "investigate the literary means through which [historical] interpretations are established in the first place," how "real events in the past can be symbolically reconstituted and invested with a particular significance for a latter-day public."[456] The title is one of the primary means to achieve this; its lawmaking function defines the way readers approach and recall the past.

Let us take a look at Spector's *Who Killed Apollo and Julian Augustus?* Question titles, though uncommon, are not unheard of. Some, such as Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, appeal to a readership in possession of subject-specific knowledge.[457] In Dick's case, the title relies on readers being aware of debates around consciousness and its relationship to the ethics of robotics. Spector's title, it could be argued, expects the reader to know something of late antiquity, including the significance of Julian's religious reforms and hatred of Christianity.[458] If readers are in possession of this material, then they may know the answer, or at least possible answers, to the question. As Abbott notes, "The level of questions is also a level of answers."[459] In asking, in advance

[452] See, for example, Jones: 2017 and Dunn: 2017.
[453] Eliot: 1985, 5.
[454] Derrida: 1992, 201.
[455] Maiorino: 2008, 67.
[456] Rigney: 1991, xii.
[457] Maclean: 1991, 275.
[458] For more on audiences recognising titular clues, see Maguire: 2016.
[459] Abbott: 2008, 61.

of the story, who killed Apollo and Julian, Spector's title not only sets up anticipation and expectation on the part of the reader, but also, by raising the question to begin with, makes the title a site of resolution and justification. The title contains its answer(s), and either rewards the reader prior to reading the story, frustrates them, or encourages them to seek answers.[460]

Spector's title spurs the reader to engage in deeper historiographical debates. To begin with, it acts in conversation with ancient sources, many of whom questioned how the emperor died. Ammianus Marcellinus claimed the spear that killed Julian was "directed no one knows by whom," while Libanius hinted at Christian involvement, before backtracking to blame the Saracens.[461] Christian writers mostly put it down to divine providence, and the answer was never formally agreed, with the question of who *exactly* killed Julian continuing long after his death.[462] Over time, the question grew into a larger, counterfactual, 'What If?'. From the Renaissance on, artists have depicted Julian's death as the vicissitudes of fate, the historical moment that consigned us to a Christian world. Spector's title engages with this tradition, and offers a popular platform for an historical inquiry into this turning point. The title, by referring to both Julian and Apollo, asks what active agents there were in play that led to the murder of not just an emperor, but also traditional Roman religion encapsulated by the Sun god.[463] Cowart argued that "turning point fictions address directly the question: When and how did the present become the present?"[464] Julian stands at the crossroads of religious change, and his place in Spector's title reinforces the notion that history might have evolved along a different path had he survived, and that because of his murder, the world is as it is today. By situating Julian and Apollo as victims of a crime, the title also proposes additional generic frames, where the past becomes, as in Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, the scene of an investigation. Much like Doherty's *Murder Imperial*, these works demonstrate the affinity between detective and historical fiction, with the latter borrowing from the former to create investigative readers and characters interested in finding out what actually happened.[465] *Who Killed Apollo and Julian Augustus* and *Murder Imperial* suggest an excavation of long-established, controversial questions, along with a discussion of blame, placed at the feet of historical persons. They engender the past as a puzzle whose threads are revealed by the detective-reader, and they offer a type of retrospective justice to soothe historical injustices that cannot be resolved.

A different approach to the same period is taken by Merezhkovsky in *Death of the Gods*. Like many titles, it is both "apprehensive and comprehensive," apprehensive because it is proleptic and

[460] See Genette: 1980, 73-7 and his discussion of advance notices and mentions in narrative fiction.
[461] See Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*, 25.3 and Libanius, *Oration 18* and *On Avenging Julian.*
[462] Ross: 2016, 10-15; see also Murdoch: 2003, 182-196.
[463] For more on the significance of the Sun in Julian's philosophy and religious practice, see Smith: 1995.
[464] Cowart: 1989, 10.
[465] Groot: 2010, 85.

"consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later," and comprehensive because it is unequivocal that something terminal will happen to a set of divinities.[466] As noted above, however, the title also appears antithetical to its story.[467] Being a historical novel, it is unlikely to include depictions of immortal gods or indeed, their (impossible) death. Instead, this surface-level reading, while perfectly legitimate, is challenged by what the title leaves unsaid, by the way language signals its opposite. Thus the *Death of the Gods* implies the prospect of rebirth, a theme referred to in the introduction ("Centuries pass, and from the bosom of the waters ... they come forth again"), and picked up in Merezhkovsky's later works.[468] Similarly, in citing the death of something, the title raises the indirect question of what will fill the gap. The answer to this is 'Christianity', which becomes apparent in the subtitle (*Julian the Apostate*) where Merezhkovsky refers to the emperor Julian, and implicitly, to his death. The birth of God logically follows from the death of the gods. This divine death is represented symbolically in the title not by human failure to believe in the gods, but by bereavement, the acute loss of tradition, an event that forecloses duality, polytheism, and any possibility of syncretism. The side effect of this apprehensive and comprehensive thematic exploration is that the title appears to set the death of the gods as a dramatic and definite moment; while dying is implied, death is a permanent end. The narrative purpose of these types of advance notice is clear; what is less clear is the extent to which these literary markers and manoeuvres impact the historical imagination. If titles and other advance notices help 'weave' the narrative together, then by extension Merezhkovsky's title might have an equal effect on the tapestry of a reader's own historical imagination.[469] Such a title helps to further Julian's short reign as a tipping point from which there was no return. The title encourages readers to think organically about historical processes in terms of rise and fall, birth and death, rebirth and afterlife, while the spotlight remains firmly on events and individuals.[470]

A similar pattern emerges in the titles of novels that focus on a Christian reading of late antiquity. *Constantine: The Miracle of the Flaming Cross*, *In This Sign Conquer*, and *The Living Wood: Saint Helena and the Emperor Constantine* all suggest that in addition to emperors, the second most popular means to make reference to late antiquity is by religious experience. Hollander claimed that "a title is, or contains implicitly, a kind of statement of literary intention."[471] Slaughter's title of *Constantine: The Miracle of the Flaming Cross* offers the emperor's name and a reference to a definitive, miraculous event. The intention here is to make use of the association between miracles

[466] See Maiorino: 2008, 2; for more on prolepsis, see Genette: 1997, 82, and Genette: 1980, 39-40.
[467] Genette: 1997, 82-83.
[468] Merezhkovski: 1997, 10-11.
[469] Genette: 1980, 73-74.
[470] Cowart: 1989, 120.
[471] Hollander: 1975, 214.

and Christianity, to instigate a Christianising frame around a narrative account of Constantine. Slaughter's title directs its readership by alluding to Constantine's 'conversion', as well as to the biographical focus of the novel, following the style of Waugh and Vidal. What is really at stake here is the relationship *between* Constantine and this miraculous event. The novel's title makes a bold step into well-known historiographical territory, and in the process "subsume[s] ... the many voices, the ever widening connotations of the original" description of the 'conversion' by the Christian apologists Lactantius and Eusebius of Caesarea.[472] More, it offers to reconcile them, to inquire into the authenticity of this event, a reading reinforced by the historical note, which hopes to use this event to inspire the faithful.[473] Constantine's 'conversion' and its associated miracles (this includes Helena's 'discovery' of the True Cross) remain in the public eye because they have been used to provide historical evidence for Christianity's claims to truth. Echoes of these events can be found across cultural production.[474] As Rigney argues, "the cultural power of an artistic work [or in this case an event] [should be] located in the cultural activities it gives rise to, rather than in what it is in itself."[475] Constantine's 'conversion' reverberates across time; this resonance is picked up and its frequency increased by the 'repeating stations' of novelistic titles that broadcast the story further afield and over such obstacles as cultural relevance and scepticism.

While a number of titles contribute to the dichotomy established in late antiquity between Christian and 'pagan' narratives, others provide the means to challenge this type of remembrance. One way to break down the dominance of religious and/or imperial allusions is to make use of alternative history and the tropes afforded by fantasy, illustrated by Bradley and Paxson's *Priestess of Avalon* and Ford's *The Dragon Waiting*. These novels subvert the known history of the period, the former by advertising its commitment to a druidic, mystical past through reference to the legendary island of Avalon, and the latter by citing dragons, a quintessential component of fantasy. Neither refers to late antiquity; *Priestess of Avalon* may even confuse readers, since although the Arthurian island of Avalon features prominently, the heroine is Saint Helena. The novel frustrates the standard depiction of Helena's life, liberating her from the Christian tradition and re-presenting her story through the lens of spiritualism. Similarly, while *The Dragon Waiting* eclipses its historical setting, other paratexts note the author's attempt to rewrite the historical record by having Julian survive; such a narrative fits logically with the fantastic title. What both titles achieve, therefore, is an "attack on ... the realist mode" and its form of historical representation, as well as established historical

[472] Maclean: 1991, 275.
[473] Slaughter: 1965, 430.
[474] See Potter: 2013, 3, see also Pynchon: 2013, 119 for a reference to 'In this sign, conquer'.
[475] Rigney: 2010, 349.

events, the objects of that representation.[476] The deployment of fantasy as a frame encourages readers to rethink what they know about the past, along with the bounds of the possible.

According to Adorno, titles are "a means of making an impression on the consumer."[477] *The Philosopher Prince* is almost a direct quotation from Ammianus Marcellinus' favourable portrayal of the emperor Julian in his *History of the Later Roman Empire*, which tells of how Julian made use of his knowledge of the former (philosophy) to enhance his practice of the latter (rulership).[478] More than this, however, the title alludes to the Roman *princeps* (emperor/leader), and is powerfully reminiscent of both Plato's 'philosopher king' and Machiavelli's *The Prince*. The use of the term 'prince' sidesteps associations of kingship and tyranny (the very aim of 'princeps'), while the allusion to Plato evokes the necessity of loving both wisdom and its practical applications. The title activates various frames of reference, including the idea of waiting in line (in the novel, Julian is not yet emperor), the way princes should strive for a simple life of learning (Julian does so in the story), and also Machiavelli's theory that the aims of princes justify the means (Julian resists, but ultimately engages in civil war to become emperor and restore justice). Julian was a philosopher in the Neo-Platonic tradition, and a prolific writer, whose works demonstrate his wide-ranging interests. He was considered to possess characteristics reminiscent of Rome's 'good' emperors, such as Trajan, a leader praised for being the "ideal prince," conscious of "political moderation" and bearing a "love of peace, "as well as the philosopher Marcus Aurelius, said to be the model for Julian's "actions and character."[479] Julian's legacy, both in imagination and in literature, has been used to judge successors and successive eras.[480] By suggesting and combining a number of defining activities, Waters' title brings together traditions associated with rulership in the person of Julian. Meanwhile, the definite article suggests Julian is *the* exemplar of the philosopher prince.

Eco once said that readers "cannot escape the notions prompted by *The Red and the Black* or *War and Peace*."[481] Titles such as *The Philosopher Prince* and *Gods and Legions* create dynamic frames around their works. The latter in particular is a metonym for both Roman legions and Rome itself as a historical empire complete with religious traditions and military renown.[482] Titles are arresting; they make readers stop and think. Taken together, they suggest a "way of *knowing* the past or engaging with it" that reduces its complexity by sampling popular aspects, capturing the

[476] See Groot: 2010, 133.
[477] Adorno: 1992, 9.
[478] Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*, 16.5.
[479] See Walsh: 2006, xii; peace here means internal peace within the empire; for the virtues of Julian, see Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*, 25.4 and 16.1 for comparisons with other emperors.
[480] See Ross: 2016, 10.
[481] Eco: 1980, 541.
[482] For more on metonymy and titles, see Genette: 1997, 82.

whole through a representative example.[483] The role that titles play as both an advert for a book's historical contents, and an advance taste of it, cannot be understated, especially in terms of how it shapes conceptions of history.[484] Titles are a subjective means of understanding the past because they appeal to ideas formed through exposure to the accepted doxa of history.[485]

As we draw to the end of our prospective reading of titles, what remains to be seen is how the range of interpretations they welcome are consolidated and placed in the wider context of the book. Each paratext has the potential to attach further meaning to the title, which helps the critic to explore the ways the title is being used to frame the story. To fully appreciate the title's significance, there "must be a framed occasion ... a semiotic space within which particular objects (texts) can be made to mean something."[486] This framed occasion manifests itself during a reading of the other signifying structures that the genre offers. It is to these we now turn.

[483] Groot: 2016, 156.
[484] MacLaverty: 1997, 188-190.
[485] Titles can also challenge this doxa, because of our familiarity with it, see Maclean: 1991, 275.
[486] MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 87.

§2 Front Covers, Blurbs, Branding

"First pages are the frontispiece of literature."[487]
– Giancarlo Maiorino

What else sells history, in addition to titles? What images, colours, deeds, and slogans best identify, in a crowded modern marketplace, the otherwise predominantly text-based product of the historical novel, in order to advertise its uniquely historical contents to potential readers? With their (historical) imagination piqued by the title, the next place market readers might pick up explicit messages regarding the content of the story, including what type of history is being presented, is the cover and blurb.[488] The imagery found here helps to visualise the statements made in the title, making them easier to process and invest in. As part of the historical frame, cover art and blurbs also allow reflection on the development of recognisable 'brands' for historical periods.

Covers of historical novels declare a commitment to history. They inform the reader about the historical contents of the novel, and provide real-world context for its protagonists, often identified, as we saw previously, by the title. In capturing aspects of history (on the cover), and retracing historical events (identified in the blurb), the paratexts of historical novels are powerfully evocative frames designed to achieve a purpose: namely, to introduce readers to the novel's represented past. Steeped in historical imagery, cover art and blurbs ease the transfer from "everyday reality" to the otherness of the past as conceived in the historical imagination.[489] They do this by implicitly requiring readers to situate the novel in relation to similar works that condense, storify, and characterise the past. Second, they "refer to the world beyond the page," or more specifically, the world as it once was.[490] Third, these paratexts inscribe "metamessages that aim to exert control over what is enclosed."[491] Cover art and blurbs foreground specific means to understand the contents of a historical novel by providing the reader with messages about how to read the messages within. Such messages exert a significant influence over interpretation and imagination. Over time, these metamessages have been refined through widespread repetition, effectively 'branding' eras of history. Such 'brands' encourage historical expectations, which can lead to disenchantment if popularised images are omitted from novelistic representations.[492]

[487] Maiorino: 2008, 3.
[488] Rubik: 2006, 343; see also Burge: 2012, 96-102, who applies this type of analysis to historical novels set in the medieval world, and considers the marketing implications of 'medieval' tropes.
[489] MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 93.
[490] Mak: 2011, 17.
[491] MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 93 and 106; see also Maclean: 1991, 274 and Jansen: 2014, 16.
[492] Lowenthal: 2015, 517.

"Knowledges of 'Rome' have become effects of its reconstruction in moving images."[493] Maria Wyke explored this concept in relation to historical fiction on film. The static illustrations of cover art, however, along with those conjured by the blurb, are not exempt from this phenomenon. On the contrary, the cover art of a historical novel is the single most important visual aid to the imaginative work required to envisage Rome, with maps a close second. Cover design identifies historical novels set in Rome as belonging to a certain mode of "cultural production."[494] Much like the portico of a neoclassical building, these first pages signal adherence to a set of historical tropes, pay homage to a classical tradition, and in the process suggest how to confront what will be contained within, drawing attention to the frame readers have to pass through to gain access to the past. To demonstrate this in practice, I have split my case study into groups that reflect notable trends in design. I will comment on only one edition of each novel, though it is worth bearing in mind that cover art is often revised during a reprint.

Front Covers

"One mustn't judge [a book] by th' outside."[495]
– George Eliot

The history of cover art is also the history of title pages. Since the inception of the codex, books have been bound with a variety of materials, including wood, leather, cloth, and paper. Cover illustration, at least in the form familiar today, has only been around for a fraction of that time. Medieval texts were rich in precious metals, patterns, and internal illuminations, but the title pages of early modern books are the true precursors to cover art, with engraved illustrations on the frontispiece concerning subject matter, influence, and/or portraiture. Much like adverts for contemporary novels, the title pages of early modern books were also turned into posters, demonstrating that images have played a role in the publicity of fiction long before cover design became the norm.[496] Images have also been central to the reading of history in fiction since the two were combined in the novel. The reprints of Scott's Waverley Novels, for example, gained additional title page illustrations of characters from within the novel, opening up new avenues for readers to imagine the past. Nowadays, title pages do little more than repeat the title and author's name, but the space they allocated for illustrations made cover art feasible. In the mid-nineteenth century, advances in print technology and the use of cloth for binding allowed imagery to be printed directly onto covers, and, after almost a century of experimentation that culminated in the avant-garde style of *The Yellow Book* series at the turn of the

[493] Wyke: 1997, 3.
[494] Groot: 2010, 63.
[495] Eliot: 1860, from Chapter 3.
[496] MacLaverty: 1997, 180-181.

twentieth century, cover art came into its own.[497] Over the decades to come, the hallmarks of graphic design were to be felt across book production, on dust jackets and covers alike.[498]

One effect of this shift in focus from the title page to the covers – or from the inside to the outside – is that the genre indication, which was originally implied by the title and then expanded on via the title page, could now also be carried by the cover.[499] Artists were able to experiment with the visual depiction of pastness as a means to sell history via fiction.[500] This act is presented as separate to the story, a supplement, not only by space (the covers are the container for the story), but also by paratextual markings (the artist is usually identified on the back cover or the copyright page as distinct from the author). In practice, however, cover art can seem more central to the story (and its act of historical reconstruction) than the story itself, drawing, as it does, on ideas from the story and the era in question, before presenting them as keys to the meaning of the work. The result is that cover art has the potential to hardwire certain readings of antiquity, from which a reader proceeds to make sense of a work and the past it represents.

Let us take two examples, namely Ford's *Gods and Legions* (Figure 1) and Waters' *The Philosopher Prince* (Figure 2). In the former, the subtitle and the rhetorical trailer above the soldier proclaims that the gods and legions alluded to are those belonging to the Roman Empire, and this is reinforced by the soldier on horseback, clothed in armour appropriate to the period, and more importantly, crowned with laurel. This distinguishes the soldier as a commander, most likely the young emperor spoken of in the trailer. The men beneath the horse's hooves further develop the military focus (instigated by the title), while "crusade" (from the trailer) conjures images of warfare driven by religious ideology, or at least hints at an aggressive campaign for social/political change. This is a theme that will prove central to Ford's tale of the emperor Julian as a military genius who fought for religious and political change, led his army into Persia, and was tragically murdered by a Christian companion averse to his pagan zeal. The cover creates a window the reader dives through to reach a bloodied, uncertain past where valour and personal victory on the battlefield were the prime movers of historical events. It prepares the reader for what to expect, but also evokes compelling ideas of Roman history as the domain of military conquest complete with warrior emperors. In Julian's case, this is applicable, but when the vast majority of historical novels set in

[497] Genette: 1997, 22-25; even as late as 1897, however, novels such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* were published without cover art, see Boudreau: 2011, 27.
[498] For more on this history, see Novin: 2015, 'Design for Book Covers and Dust Jackets'.
[499] Genette: 1997, 97-99.
[500] My focus here is different to Genette's, since although he explored the layout and purpose of the cover, and noted (Genette: 1997, 30) that use of certain images "cannot fail to generate inferences (intended or not) about [the] meaning [of the text]" he mostly avoided speaking about cover art, focusing instead on author portraits in editions of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, and the textual markers found on covers; I am also expanding on Groot: 2009, 222-223, who briefly raised the importance of covers of historical novels.

Rome contain such images (most notably those series set in the late Republic and early Empire), it is clear that they have become normalised, and thus that Rome itself has become a militarised place in the imagination.[501] Figure 2 takes a different – though complementary – approach to its depiction of Julian. Instead of military regalia, the image announces antiquity through classical dignity and

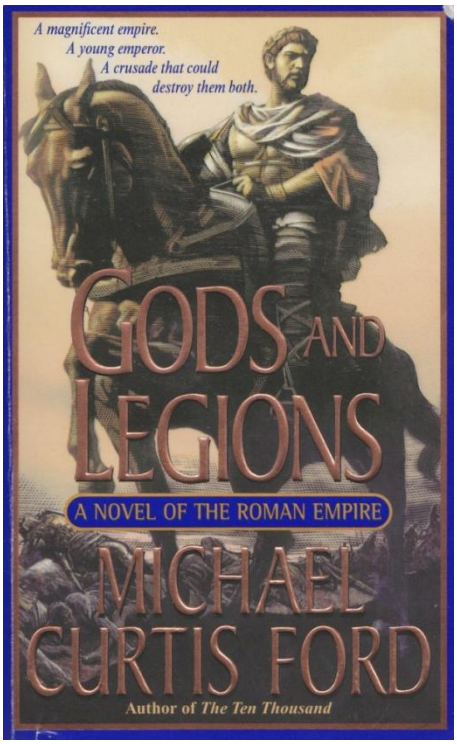


Figure 1: Front cover of Ford (2002)

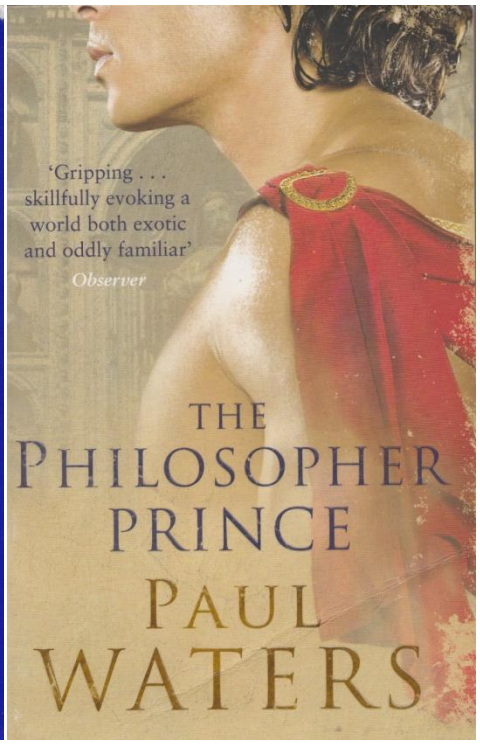


Figure 2: Front cover of Waters (2011)

learning, signified by the architectural backdrop, statuary, and Grecian attire. The drapery, pin, and semi-nude flesh gesture to the "exotic" past alluded to by the *Observer* quotation, while the central male figure, superimposed on imperial architecture, symbolises the concerns of the story: the human cost of political decisions and the history of homosexuality, as explored through the fictional protagonists. The colour of the cloth is important, too, not only for signalling regal standing, but because red has become a byword for Rome.[502] It is easy to imagine the figure as the prince alluded to in the title, a youthful and reluctant ruler who would rather be studying. This particular portrayal of Julian stems from Ammianus' history, where the future emperor is first introduced in student dress.[503] The Machiavellian echoes in the title are played out in the cover; here is a "new prince … to introduce a new order."[504] This order comes into focus through the cover's overlaid texture, which mirrors prince and state, while also commenting on Julian's love of classical heritage.

[501] I'm thinking here of a number of contemporary novel series set in Rome, including Simon Scarrow's *Eagles of the Empire*, Conn Iggulden's *Emperor* series, Ben Kane's *Eagles of Rome* series, Robert Fabbri's *Vespasian* series, and Douglass Jackson's *Gaius Valerius Verrens* series.
[502] See Figure 11 below for another example of 'Roman red'.
[503] Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*, 15.8.
[504] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 82.

Cover art, like titles, has an anterior and posterior framing effect. Figures 1 and 2 advance recognisable but relatively ambiguous renderings of antiquity in advance of the story. They package and appeal to a generic type of Roman/ancient historical content, to engaging archetypes. The images only become specific during the course of a reading as their meaning unfolds, as the story is subsumed into one iconic image, consolidating important readings of Julian as the soldier and/or the statesman. The reading of a cover is a roundabout journey that begins with the title and loops back, moving, as above, from gods and legions to war, to Rome, to crusades, to religion and finally, to the gods' fate; or, from an unnamed philosopher prince to ancient Greece, to philosophy, sexuality, and back to Julian's embodiment of these ideas. More than just narrowing down possible genre(s), then, cover art helps to create powerful associations between title, text, and imagery, helping readers understand what *type* of Rome they are consuming.

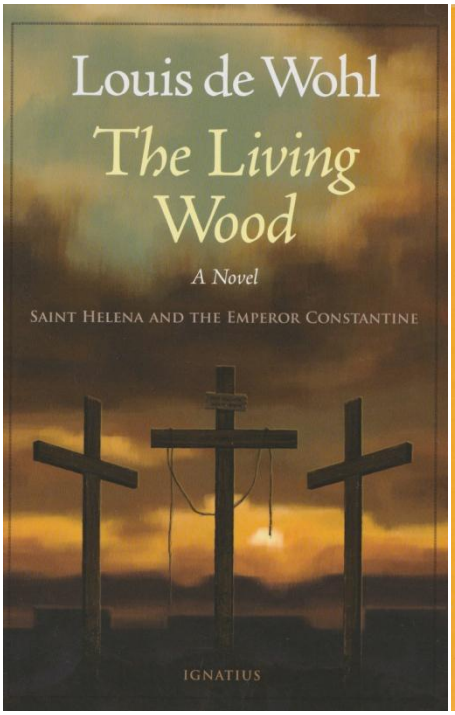


Figure 3: Front cover of Wohl (1984)

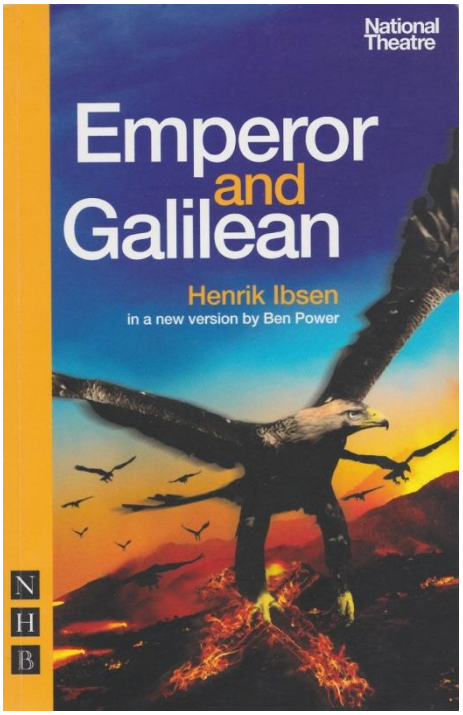


Figure 4: Front cover of Ibsen ([1873] 2011)

A more common way to tell if a novel is set in late antiquity, as opposed to another era of Roman history, is to look for references to religion, especially Christianity. We saw, in the previous section, how titles affirm Christianity as a historical force, highlighting miracles, the conflict between Church and state, and the lives of religious figures as driving forces of change. Cover art stabilises these ideas through recourse to iconography, in particular the sign of the cross. Figure 3, for example, presents the reader with the aftermath of Jesus' crucifixion on Calvary. Since the story focuses on the history (and rediscovery by St. Helena) of the True Cross, including what this meant for the development of Christianity under Constantine, this is appropriate. The cover art is a reference to both the death of Jesus, and the miraculous discovery of the Cross centuries later, to its

paramount importance, historically, at the heart of Christian faith. Figure 4, meanwhile, connects to a different tradition, one concerned with religious strife, iconoclasm, and disputes regarding earthly and spiritual power. This cover, created for the recently revised edition of Ibsen's play, uses eagles to symbolise Rome, her reach and military power. The cover juxtaposes this with a combusting cross in an eagle's talon, representing the religious war Julian instigated against Christianity. Such an emblem could also be taken to illustrate Julian's attempt to destroy Christianity, not through persecution, but through the destruction of the ideas that Christians continue to revere. In representing tension between Church and state, the cover captures a moment when the eagle and cross were not as united as they became. The implication is that if Julian had survived, they might never have been unified. The cover thus solidifies Julian's place in counterfactual history. A final

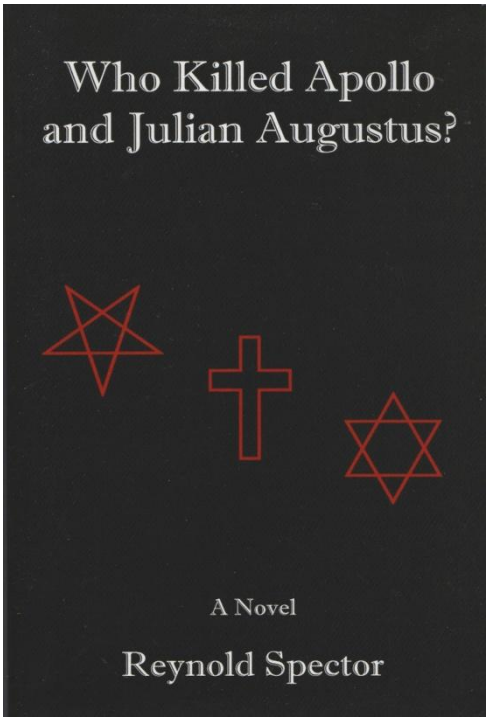


Figure 5: Front cover of Spector (2006)

example, Figure 5, combines the cross with two other icons, the Jewish Star of David and an inverted pentagram. The latter forgoes association with Apollo and classical paganism in favour of a symbol that nineteenth century occult writers considered evil, one that "overturns the proper order of things."[505] The conflation leaves the reader with a clearly recognisable symbol for the continued relevance of 'paganism', including its association with magic, which the novel explores through Julian's interest in theurgy. All three icons are essential to the plot and the question posed by the title. Spector writes about how Julian's policies of toleration, fascination with theurgy, and removal of benefits to the Christians affected adherents of all religions. The cover art suggests Julian stands at the centre of conflicting historical forces in the form of major world religions, and that each is

[505] See Lévi: ([1854] 1999.

implicated in his death, most notably Christianity. The cross is given agency by the title; the only way for Christianity to triumph over paganism and solidify its place at the centre of European society, to greatly diminish a sophisticated cultural tradition and reduce it to a "demon-generating cult," was to murder the gods and their advocate.[506] This, the novel suggests, led to the collapse of the empire.

In addition to military, cultural, and religious themes, historical figures appear on cover art to depict important historical moments, as in Figures 6 and 7. Slaughter's *Constantine* provides a representation of the emperor's 'conversion'. The Chi-Rho symbol, the monogram for Christ's name, is revealed in the heavens above the emperor, who is poised to use the sign on his solders' shields before leading them to victory at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. This elaborate promotion unites title and cover and encourages a literal reading of the miracle within the novel's biographical framework. The cover reinforces the centrality of Constantine's 'conversion' to the novel's contents.

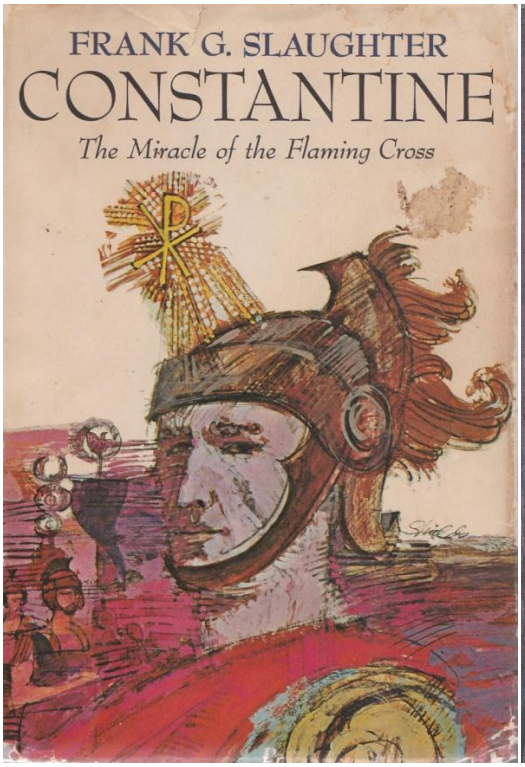


Figure 6: Front cover of Slaughter (1965)

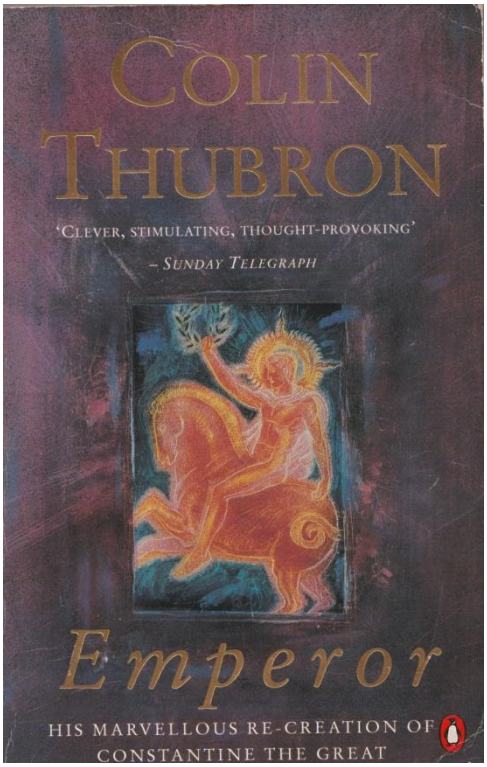


Figure 7: Front cover of Thubron (2002)

In Thubron, the message is more opaque, but still present. The emperor, illuminated by a halo of light, wields a crown, an allusion to his future as sole emperor, a victory that Constantine's biographers ascribed to his 'conversion' to Christianity.[507] The cover, however, is far less celebratory compared to Slaughter's. As the *Telegraph* notes, this is a "thought-provoking" novel. Instead of focusing on Constantine's face in his decisive moment of 'conversion', immanent and present, the publisher presents the reader with an afterimage, something equally powerful in capturing Constantine's allegiance to Christianity, but read back after the event. This fits with Thubron's

[506] Spector: 2006, 268.
[507] See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, and Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*.

exploration of Constantine's doubt, his adoption of Christianity as a fiction to conceal life's meaninglessness. What I want to draw attention to is not so much that illustrations shape how

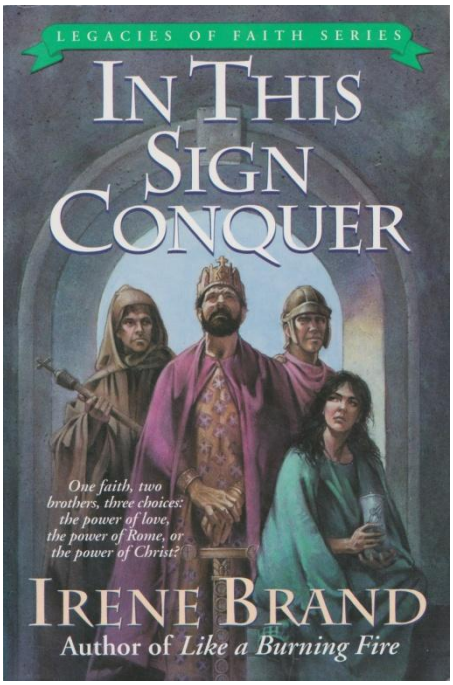
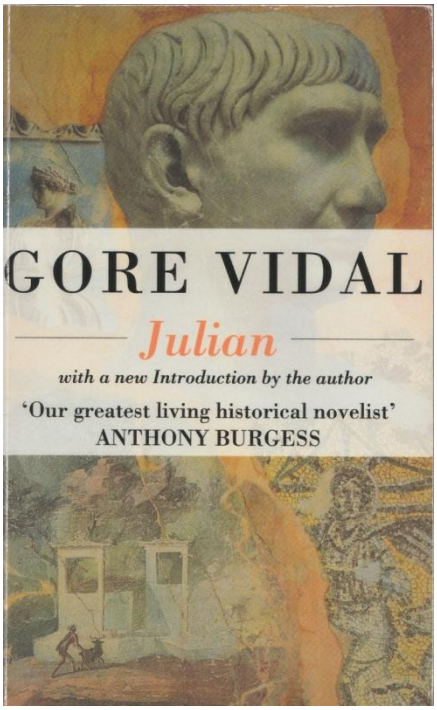


Figure 8: Front cover of Brand (1996)

readers imagine historical content, though this is certainly the case, but that cover art fixes ideas of history in a stylised image. Figure 8 makes this even more apparent in its visualisation of the novel's trailer. Namely, the choice the two brothers (depicted as a Christian ascetic and a Roman soldier), will have to make between Rome (signalled by the emperor), the power of Christ (indicated by the Christian crosses), and love (symbolised by a woman). By separating out the individuals portrayed into categories, the cover establishes the incompatibility of these choices. Figure 8 shows how covers 'brand' the concept of history on offer by adopting icons that come complete with abbreviated ideas of history, which then trigger the same ideas of history in the reader, regardless of artistic approach. Through cultural familiarity, these icons have left a lasting impression, enabling covers to differentiate the type of history on offer and determine its application.

Another example of this can be seen when covers tap into historical artefacts and use these to legitimise a novel, providing a sense of expectation. Figures 9 and 10 make use of ancient statuary for this purpose. Statues connect the novels to a continuum of historically authentic representation. What is unusual here is that Baxter's *Emperor* and Vidal's *Julian* make use of two emperors who do not feature in the story text. In Baxter's case, a statue of Caesar dominates the upper half of the cover, yet the action and setting of the novel (Roman Britain) takes place decades after Caesar's first foray to the island. The cover of Vidal's *Julian* is even more bizarre, presenting the side profile of the emperor Trajan, who reigned two and a half centuries earlier than Julian. Rather than treating these



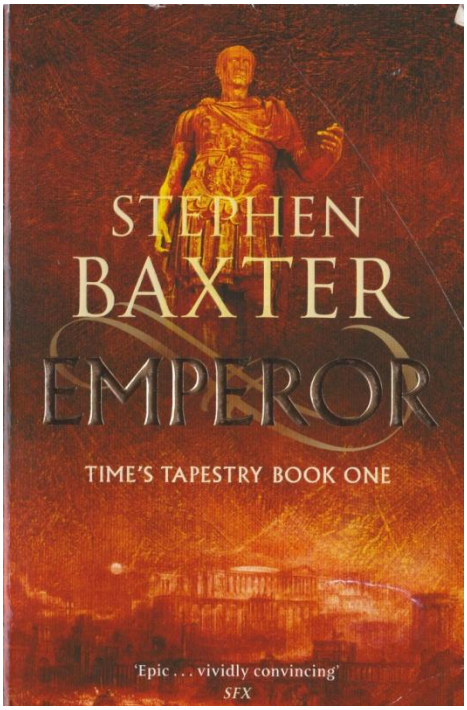


Figure 9: Front cover of Vidal (1964) *Figure 10: Front cover of Baxter (2007)*

examples as mistakes, however, it is more productive to think of them as one aspect of a patchwork of suitable artefacts that refer readers to ancient Rome (Figure 9 also includes a mosaic and wall painting), especially since the statues are not identified by another paratext. "The look of it ... suffices" argued Lowenthal, who pointed out that accuracy is not the prime motivator of audiences of historical fiction.[508] Rome is introduced to the reader through a multi-media collage of real artefacts, each of which contributes to a sense of Rome's presence and identifies a focus that the reader can use to determine the novel's contents.[509] The pictures themselves are enough for "a significant connection [to be] irresistibly established."[510] In Vidal's case, the reader is offered a selection of works of cultural value, placed alongside the tactile profile of an imperial figurehead from classical portraiture, which foreshadow the novel's adroit exploration of Julian's revival of classical culture, as seen through the lens of two aristocrats. The front cover of Baxter, on the other hand, situates Caesar over a sprawling and imposing rendition of Rome, possibly aflame. The layout, colour, and title all work together to present this work as the "Epic" SFX claims it to be.

Adorno bemoaned the use of cover art in the mid-twentieth century, claiming that "books no longer look like books."[511] "Covers," he said, "have become advertisements for their books."[512] In its capacity to advertise the contents of a historical novel, cover art not only helps to direct readers

[508] Lowenthal: 2015, 582.
[509] Bernier and Newman: 2005, 150.
[510] Genette: 1997, 31.
[511] Adorno: 1992, 20.
[512] Adorno: 1992, 20.

towards antiquity, but attempts to drop them directly into specific renderings of Roman antiquity.[513] It offers ways to visualise in advance what the reader will find in the story by establishing contiguity between contemporary/ancient artistic depictions of historical figures and events, and those figures and events themselves. Cover design works off and strengthens these patterns through the repetitive use of colour and emblems that reaffirm what history is about and how it should be understood. The result is that cover art comes to stand metonymically for aspects and approaches to ancient Rome, unifying a network of signs from a variety of works published by different houses, while also helping readers to distinguish between different types of Roman past.[514]

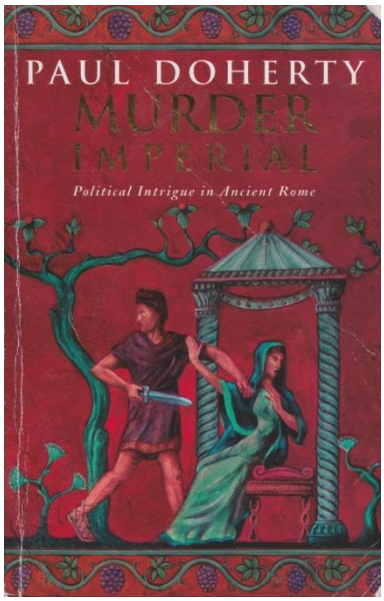


Figure 11: Front cover of Doherty (2003)

Blurbs

"Publishing (and therefore society) is sometimes structured like a language ... it is, in other words, structured by subject."[515]
– Gerard Genette

To support the arresting images of cover art – those paratextual adjectives that modify the subject of the story – historical novels contain blurbs to further contextualise and encapsulate the events and figures within. Blurbs are the most recent paratextual supplement to the historical novel, originating in the early twentieth century. Like cover art, they remain firmly outside the author's control; as such, they are unique thresholds that offer seductive pre-readings of the story through their privileged handing-over of its subject.[516] If titles are the opening lines of a novel, blurbs constitute the first paragraph, designed to set the scene, introduce the protagonists, and capture

[513] For more on this concept, see Gray: 2010, 55.
[514] Gray: 2010, 76 and MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 91.
[515] Genette: 1997, 23.
[516] Bernier and Newman: 2005, 149.

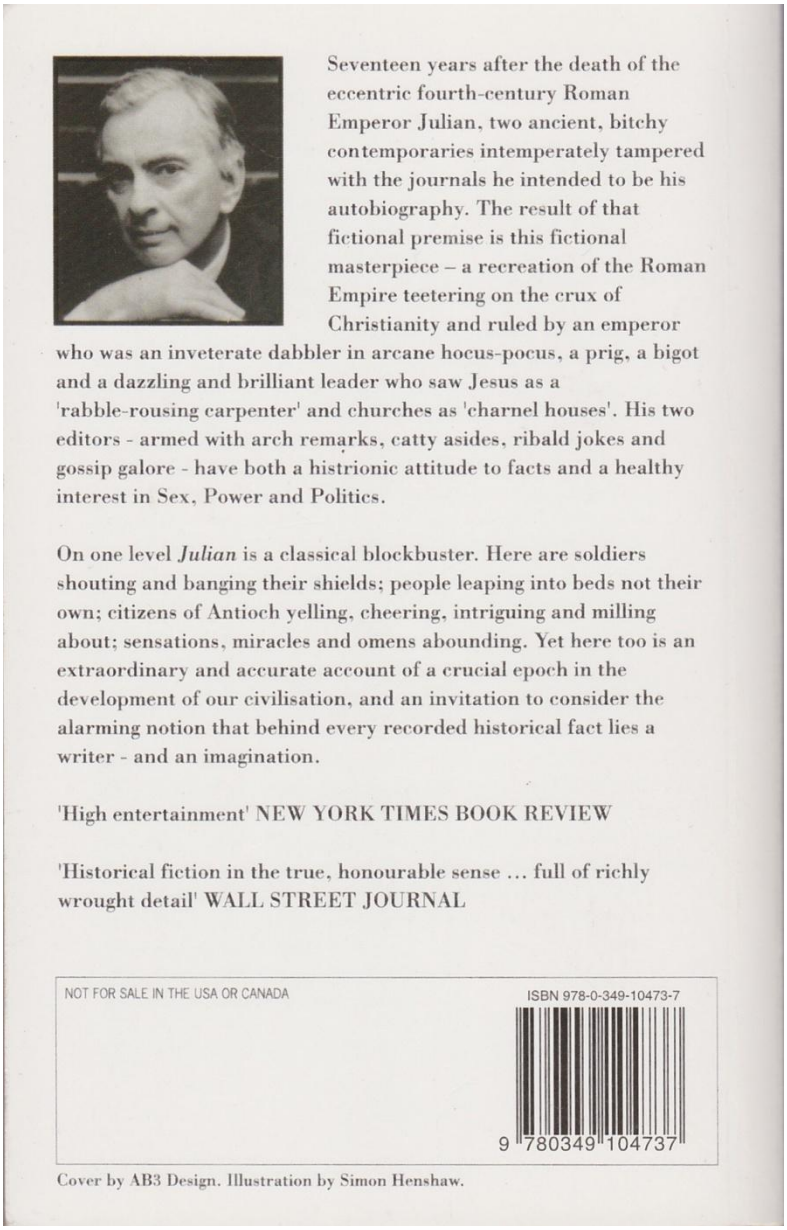
the ambiance of the story, all before a reader has opened the book. The site and function of the blurb means that it acts like a trailer for the novel, offering low-level spoilers and taglines. Ford's *Gods and Legions* (Figure 1), for example, contains a tricolon above the blurb proper, written in capitals. "HE FOUGHT TO BECOME A WARRIOR. HE DARED TO BECOME AN EMPEROR. HE LIVED TO BECOME THE MOST POWERFUL MAN IN THE WORLD."[517] These sentences summarise the three acts of the novel, and thus "whet the potential audience's appetite" regarding the direction and contents of the story.[518] What I am more interested in, however, is how such rhetorical devices 'trailerise' the past, evoking the spirit of Rome without the need for lengthy narratives.

The combining of warrior and emperor further develops the militaristic reading of Julian's reign from Ford's front cover, while the third sentence proposes that ultimate power rested with an emperor, establishing a correlation between the contemporary idea of power invested in an elected official and the otherness of the past, where martial success instigated Julian's rise. Since Julian was successful on the battlefield, these notions are relevant. However, when they are displayed as abstractions within devices that are themselves abstracts for historically-inspired narratives, they contribute to powerful, generalised portraits of Rome, ones that help readers identify eras of history according to a set of repeated themes. Rome's emperors and military continue to capture the public's imagination, along with Rome as a hotbed of political intrigue. Waters' *The Philosopher Prince* proclaims that late antiquity was full of "ambitious bureaucrats and power-hungry courtiers," and that the protagonists are surrounded by "spies and adversaries."[519] Latin is deployed in Doherty's *Murder Imperial*, with the reader informed that the empress Helena will call on "the services of an '*agente in rebus politicis*' – or spy," while de Wohl's tale of Helena's discovery of the True Cross is reported to capture "with equal skill and tumult ... the shouting of the battlefield and the devious plots and counter-plots of the court."[520] Political machinations are certainly a facet of Roman history. However, when skulduggery is used to market eras of history, it becomes a core aspect of what readers remember about the past and what they expect to find in other representations of Rome. More than just affecting "initial interpretations" of the story and the past it depicts, the type of Roman history a reader expects to take away from a historical novel, including its permanence, is therefore determined by the blurb's branded attributes.[521]

We can see this even more clearly in the blurb of Vidal's *Julian*, which we encounted earlier in the Introduction. This blurb not only offers a striking example of the type of Roman history available, but also highlights the historiographical method used to construct it. In addition to "Sex,

[517] Ford: 2002, rear cover.
[518] Mahlknecht: 2011, 89.
[519] Waters: 2011, rear cover.
[520] Doherty: 2003, rear cover and de Wohl: 2008, rear cover.
[521] Gray: 2010, 79.

Power and Politics," the reader is offered "an extraordinary and accurate account of a crucial epoch in the development of our civilisation." This is formed from the correspondence between "two ancient, bitchy contemporaries [of Julian]" who have "tampered with the journals he [Julian] intended to be his autobiography." So far so good, except the blurb immediately punctures



Seventeen years after the death of the eccentric fourth-century Roman Emperor Julian, two ancient, bitchy contemporaries intemperately tampered with the journals he intended to be his autobiography. The result of that fictional premise is this fictional masterpiece – a recreation of the Roman Empire teetering on the crux of Christianity and ruled by an emperor who was an inveterate dabbler in arcane hocus-pocus, a prig, a bigot and a dazzling and brilliant leader who saw Jesus as a 'rabble-rousing carpenter' and churches as 'charnel houses'. His two editors - armed with arch remarks, catty asides, ribald jokes and gossip galore - have both a histrionic attitude to facts and a healthy interest in Sex, Power and Politics.

On one level *Julian* is a classical blockbuster. Here are soldiers shouting and banging their shields; people leaping into beds not their own; citizens of Antioch yelling, cheering, intriguing and milling about; sensations, miracles and omens abounding. Yet here too is an extraordinary and accurate account of a crucial epoch in the development of our civilisation, and an invitation to consider the alarming notion that behind every recorded historical fact lies a writer - and an imagination.

'High entertainment' NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

'Historical fiction in the true, honourable sense ... full of richly wrought detail' WALL STREET JOURNAL

NOT FOR SALE IN THE USA OR CANADA

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Cover by AB3 Design. Illustration by Simon Henshaw.

Figure 12: Rear cover of Vidal (1964)

this historical assertion and Vidal's epistolary mode. "The result of that fictional premise is this fictional masterpiece ... an invitation to consider the alarming notion that behind every recorded historical fact lies a writer – and an imagination." Fiction, understood here as a credible invention, is deployed to reveal the invention of all history, and held to the same standard. Vidal's blurb develops a 'brand' of fiction that sells a validated past to the educated reader by promising the usual classical romp dressed in a self-aware literary-historical style. The understanding is that on completion of this work, a reader will not only learn about Julian's endeavours and the religiosity of his age while being

entertained by Rome's theatrics (the limit of most historical novels), but that the story will also encourage them to reflect on the writing of history. The blurb is used to reveal the imaginative quality necessary to historical writing, and its honesty authorises Vidal's claims to represent Julian's history. In this way, the blurb announces an ethical mission statement regarding the purpose of the story, along with its appropriation of history.[522] It reveals the ongoing negotiation at the heart of the novel between ideas of history and fiction, a dialogue that allows this novelistic "blockbuster" to claim to accurately recreate "the Roman Empire teetering on the crux of Christianity."

Two further examples will help me expand on this idea. First, let us look at those novels that appropriate the past to make historical claims about Christianity. The blurb of Waugh's *Helena* lists the empress's achievements, including the mythical tale of her discovery of the True Cross, as historical facts. The reader is told she "made the historic pilgrimage to Palestine, found pieces of wood from the true Cross, and built churches at Bethlehem and Olivet."[523] Similarly, the blurb in Slaughter's *Constantine* states that "Constantine saw a fiery cross in the sky, and thenceforth took as his motto: 'In this sign conquer.' This mystic revelation, as reported by Eusebius and other contemporaries, led to Constantine's acceptance and then devoted use of Christianity to consolidate his Empire."[524] Rather than sell Rome through her politics and intrigue, both novels issue a mission statement regarding the truthfulness of the religious events they relate, either through associating miracles with historical events, or referencing primary sources. The blurbs establish the historicity of Christian miracles in advance of their retelling, thus advertising the type of history provided. In a similar way, blurbs also instruct readers how "*not* to read" a novel.[525] Spector's *Who Killed Apollo and Julian Augusts?* uses its blurb to revise accounts of Julian's death. "At the climax of Julian's successful camping in Persia, he was assassinated."[526] This is less a suggestion for how to read the story and more a statement regarding how the reader should understand what happened. Julian did not die, but was assassinated. Blurbs can prefigure historical revisionism, announcing a challenge to the record, while also presenting alternatives to long-accepted accounts.[527]

As I see it, blurbs achieve three main things. They inscribe thematic ways to understand the Roman past, they deliver mission statements concerning the use of the past in historical novels, and alongside this, they authenticate those protagonists that claim past existence and explain why they mattered. Much like the 'about' section of a brand, blurbs provide details regarding the historical grounding of the work. Thus in Vidal's *Julian*, the blurb explains who Julian was and when he

[522] Leavenworth: 2015, 56-57; Groot: 2016, 30-42.
[523] Waugh: 1984, rear cover.
[524] Slaughter: 1965, dust jacket.
[525] Leavenworth: 2015, 56-57.
[526] Spector: 2006, rear cover.
[527] Groot: 2009, 199-200 explores a similar idea in relation to the TV series *Rome*.

reigned, supplies quotations from his writings detailing his dismissal of Christianity, and highlights his importance for European history. The blurb of Vidal's *Julian* bridges the temporal and cultural gap between now and then, and sets out why the story matters. In defining the work's pedigree and detailing what it offers, the blurb establishes a comparative framework that encourages readers to weigh representations of Rome based on the merits of their 'brand' identity.[528]

Branding

Let us finish by considering how both the front and back cover work together to create historical 'brands'. Historical novels are products whose paratextual markings "are part of the marketing process."[529] More than just marketing the novels, however, front covers and blurbs function as carefully designed labels for the past as depicted in fiction. These labels, through the use of colour, stylised images, and summaries, create a recognised series of 'brands' that share a collective power to signify ancient Rome.[530] From these, readers can infer the benefits of consuming a work, assured of constancy between various military and/or political representations. Readers are also reminded of the cultural and historical value of the period covered and what it is known for, which leaves an imprint on the imagination, certifying the story as an artefact in dialogue with the past, at least as Rome has been understood in popular culture. 'Branding' in historical fiction creates historically-aware consumers who know what to look for, enabling them to move with confidence from one product to another. Through purchasing trends, we can see how readers invest meaning in the type of past they wish to experience, thus helping to establish feedback loops between themselves and publishers, who respond to the types of Roman past that sell. Historical 'brands' are thus no more stable than genre, adapting and evolving as further historical fictions are produced.[531]

Front covers and blurbs are the entry and exit point to/from the story, the frontispiece of the genre. They engage the reader in a "contractual undertaking," helping to accommodate the reader's prior familiarity with representations of Rome, while simultaneously transmitting messages about the story, including how to read and receive its historical representation.[532] "Meanings are generated," suggest MacLachlan and Reid "where various frames meet."[533] With front covers and blurbs, the reader encounters an extensive range of message-producing paratexts, including titles, cover art, and synopses. What remains to be seen is how the name of the author on the outer/inner cover contributes to the development of historical 'brands'.

[528] Sommer: 2006, 392.
[529] Bernier and Newman: 2005, 149.
[530] Smith and Wilson: 2011, 11.
[531] MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 17.
[532] See MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 92-93, 107, and 3-4.
[533] Ibid., 85.

§3 Praise for [Insert Title] and Credentials

"What does the name of an author on the jacket matter?"[534]
– Italo Calvino

"When we study the history of a concept, a literary genre, or a branch of philosophy, these concerns assume a relatively weak and secondary position in relation to the solid and fundamental role of an author and his works."[535]
– Michel Foucault

I am interested here in the positioning of the author, not so much in terms of how an author might produce a literary text or endow it with meaning, but what function certain paratextual references to the author have in relation to the reading of historical fiction. More specifically, what I want to look at are the paratexts usually found immediately inside the cover, on the first printed page. These devices range from author biographies and details of additional works published by the same author, to quotations from others authors/reviewers in praise of recent works. Since publishing convention has carved out a unique position for these credentials and reviews *before* the contents or preface, let alone the story, they are instrumental in providing overall frames through which readers are encouraged to see the text, as well as the genre more generally. They tell readers what type of story to expect and ascribe certain values to it, while also drawing connections between the work under consideration, and other works by the same, or similar, authors.

To break things down, I have separated my case study into pairs. Each pair represents a stylistically different way of presenting author credentials and/or praise for specific works. The first consists of Waugh's *Helena* and Vidal's *Julian*. They contain 'official literary blurbs' regarding their authors, and allow us to reflect on the framing effects of cultural heavyweights. John Ford's *The Dragon Waiting* and Michael Ford's *Gods and Legions* make up the second pair. The former leads with reviews of the novel, while the latter includes quotations about Michael Ford's previous work. Both novels also contain short biographical summaries at the back. The third pair comprises Doherty's *Murder Imperial* and Waters' *The Philosopher Prince*. These novels accommodate both an author blurb *and* quotations in praise of previous novels on their first page.

We have already seen how advances in print technology combined with a developing historical consciousness inspired the creation of the historical novel's identifying paratexts. One device that we have yet to consider is the author's name, especially its application on the title page. The presence of the author's name had not necessarily been "a required feature" in medieval times, with "anonymity [being] more common."[536] It became more common in the seventeenth century, as

[534] Calvino: [1979] 1998, 101.
[535] Foucault: 1980b, 115.
[536] Yáñez-Bouza: 2016, 55.

the title pages of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* show, reflecting "the author's entry into the market place."[537] Authors, it became clear, were here to stay, as legal battles during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century awarded them royalty payments. These helped individuate authors as the sole creative producer of a work, guaranteeing its provenance and contents, complete with ownership and rights over the work.[538] This development, combined with a growing publishing industry, led to the increased production of biographical summaries. Personalisation lent authors presence and status, and more recently, celebrity. The agglomeration of biographical material, presented as either an official summary or in the form of a critical review of the story, is an exemplification of the need to certify the work as the output of an author, whose own unique selling points (be they artistic, academic, institutional, or canonical) help to market their books and affirm its worth. Genette divested himself of the responsibility of investigating biographical summaries, arguing their content does not affect the story and aims only to "place that text in the larger context of a life and an oeuvre."[539] He went further, suggesting that "A study of the paratext is certainly not the most opportune place to address the ... summary."[540] While I do not have space here to explore the history of these summaries, what I can say is that, contrary to Genette, they do frame the text that follows.[541] Author biographies appear in some form in all of the works in my case study. I will take Waugh and Vidal's biographies as exemplars of this trend, before moving on to explore how publishers adapt this framing device to authorise lesser known authors.

Before he washed his hands of author biographies, Genette equated their effect with that of the author's name, which identifies a novel as "the work of the illustrious So-and-So."[542] The biographies in Waugh and Vidal's novels span an entire page, providing not only biographical details, but also bibliographical details. They proclaim the literary significance of both authors, and therefore of the works that follow. They contextualise *Helena* and *Julian* in the larger scheme of the author's literary, political, religious, and biological life. While Genette sees these summaries as non-paratextual simply because they do not comment *directly* on the story, I believe they contribute to the novel's framing effects, which influences how readers read. Since biographical summaries are often the very first page readers will encounter, they must be considered alongside other preliminary devices as part of

[537] Hamnett: 2011, 99; see also Genette: 1997, 37-39.
[538] See Finkelstein and McCleery: 2006, 75-84, Foucault: 1980b, 124-125, and Yáñez-Bouza: 201, 55.
[539] Genette: 1997, 114-115.
[540] Ibid.
[541] For a thorough investigation of the development and personalisation of the idea of the author, including the origins of the 'life narratives' of poets, particularly when Chaucer was writing, see Pask: 1996, 9-15; see also Dobranski: 2014, who looks at how "stationers ... found ways to personalize their books and to make authors seem more immediately present," and lists early biographies included in folio editions of famous works; finally, see Pritchard: 2005 for a full survey of early prefatory biographies included in major works.
[542] Genette: 1997, 40.

the carefully constructed frame surrounding historical novels that signals a commitment to a certain kind of history. These commitments are shaped by the use of extratextual information to reconstruct an author's life and career. Such information demonstrates an author's attitude towards culture and society, and in our case, religion. These attitudes significantly impinge on a reading of Waugh and Vidal's historical novels.

I begin by analysing the general function of Waugh and Vidal's biographical summaries. Biographies make clear the 'author-function' Foucault spoke of.[543] Foucault suggested that the "aspects of an individual, which we designate as an author ... are projections," ones that create characters in the mind, in much the same way that characters are evoked in a story.[544] Readers construct Waugh or Vidal from their summaries, authors that had a very real existence, but are now pieced together in the reader's mind by traits and details of significance. Authors may be signalled as people by literary works (Waugh, it is claimed, was "received into the Roman Catholic Church," while Vidal "co-starred with Tim Robbins in the movie *Bad Roberts*"), but more importantly they become, through language and description, literary frames that orbit their works, providing further means of engagement and keys to the meaning, purpose, and legacy of their work.[545] In Waugh and Vidal's case, this is especially significant. Their cultural standing and place in the canon means that their works will be received differently to those of an unknown author. Their authority is clear from the start, or at least becomes so through the summary. For example, in Waugh's biography the reader is told where he was born and where and in what he was educated (history); they are told he came from a literary family, and are presented with a narrative of his publication history. Written and published posthumously, this summary reads like an obituary, honouring the writer, recounting his achievements, while also recording something of Waugh's humanity. In addition to this, and thanks to Waugh's fame, readers will supplement this summary with their own prior knowledge. Depending on how much the reader knows about Waugh, an author's name, as Foucault argued, "oscillate[s] between the poles of description and designation."[546] Author summaries show how an author's name acts as a nexus for information that in turn frames their work.

In Waugh and Vidal's summaries, this information offers valuable insight, signposting their authority as authors of historical fiction.[547] Waugh's summary notes his academic credentials (he read "Modern History" at Oxford), while his military record, travels, and knowledge of Christian

[543] See Foucault: 1980b.
[544] Ibid., 127.
[545] See Waugh: 1984 and Vidal: 1964, see also Foucault: 1980b, 121 and Gray: 2010, 108-109, who develops Foucault's 'author function' in relation to framing.
[546] Foucault: 1980b, 121.
[547] Historical novelists routinely draw attention to their credentials, see Kennedy and O'Gorman: 2015, 44; in doing so, novelists connect to an extensive tradition in historiography where historians, since antiquity, have followed the titles of their work with their credentials, see Lucian, *How to Write History*, 16.

history qualifies him to write a historical narrative set in the tumultuous period of late antiquity (his summary notes he wrote a biography of an Elizabethan Jesuit martyr).[548] Waugh is presented as the right authority to write the life of Saint Helena in advance of the preface, where he outlines his decision to focus on her story. In a similar vein, Vidal's summary impresses the reader with extensive biographical details that proclaim his credentials. These include his experience of World War II, the length, breadth, and range of his literary output spanning forty years, and a list of works that draw directly on history and the Classics, including *Messiah*, *City and the Pillar*, and *The Judgement of Paris*. In particular, the summary employs the authority of another author of historical fiction, Gabriel García Márquez, to support Vidal's explicitly historical works, *Burr*, *Lincoln* and *1876*. Márquez claims they are a "magnificent series of historical novels or novelized histories," which reflects well, by inference, on *Julian*.[549] Like *Helena* in Waugh's summary, Julian is also mentioned in Vidal's summary as a particular milestone. When we consider that these summaries are generalised portraits of an author's literary career, which may appear in any number of their works, this is important, as it positions both novels centrally within each author's output.

Let us finally consider how these summaries reveal each author's attitude towards history, which in turn signals their commitment to certain kinds of history. These details have the capacity to frame an understanding of the story by suggesting ways to understand the author's appropriation of history, what they hope to gain, as well as by forecasting each author's brand of tone and characterisation.[550] In Waugh's summary, the reader learns that he was "received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1930," and that his interest in Christian matters extends beyond personal faith. It is said that Waugh's biography of the Jesuit martyr, entitled *Edmund Campion*, "was awarded the Hawthornden Prize in 1936," and that he was officially commissioned to write *The Life of Right Reverend Ronald Knox*, a biography of the renowned priest, classicist, and writer.[551] Waugh's summary constructs him as an author adept at charting the lives of the faithful in all their complexity, both ancient and modern. Not only does this inform the reader of Waugh's attitude towards how the past should be remembered, but it also establishes Waugh's credentials as a biographical researcher, which sets up a discontinuity between *Helena* ("his historical novel"), and its relationship to biography, with the title echoing those of Waugh's other highly praised works.[552] The reader also gains, from the summary, a glimpse of Waugh's esteemed learning and wit through reference to his famous work, *Brideshead Revisited* (notable for its interest in Catholicism), as well as

[548] See Waugh: 1984.
[549] Vidal: 1964.
[550] See Garritzen: 2012, 413 for more on the author as a signifier of value in relation to historical writing.
[551] See Waugh: 1984.
[552] This is important, as Waugh himself wanted to write a biography of Helena, but, due to the sparse record, chose instead to recreate her life in a historical novel, see Sykes: 1975, 318-337.

his early novel, *Decline and Fall*. This novel, whose title condenses Gibbon's history of late antiquity, affirms Waugh's interest in modern society *and* in antiquity, especially in satirising certain aspects of both that he found unpalatable. This sets the tone for *Helena*, which not only charts the empresses' life and discovery of the True Cross, but also lampoons those who would discredit her "blunt assertion."[553] As a literary frame, then, Waugh "explains the presence of certain events within a text, as well as their transformations, distortions, and their various modifications."[554]

If Waugh is best placed to write a biography of a Christian saint, Vidal is positioned as the ideal author to take on the emperor known for his literary output, including the way he challenged the status quo. *Julian* is listed in Vidal's summary as "the story of the apostate Roman emperor."[555] The choice of words is telling, with 'apostate' signalling, like the titles of Vidal's other works, his interest in religion, which in this instance stems not from personal faith or conversion, but criticism. This is made explicit in Vidal's preface, where the author claims affinity with Julian, having never been "an enthusiast of monotheism," but it is present in the summary, which captures the character and authoritative voice of Vidal in advance of the story.[556] This is supported by a quote from Márquez in support of Vidal's work, which refashions historical events into something new, infusing them with satirical wit (praised by Calvino), political expeirence (noted at the start in relation to his run for office as a Democrat), and criticism (highlighted at the end via his published essays).[557] "The American tradition of independent and curious learning is kept alive in the wit and great expressiveness of Gore Vidal's criticism."[558] This quotation, which the summary lifts from the Book Critics Circle award given to Vidal in 1982, situates Vidal's thinking (and his writing) firmly beyond the regulatory force of the state or any religious body. Vidal's attitude towards history is framed through his humanism and objection to religion. While Waugh's summary frames an intervention into a Christianised – specifically Catholic – history, Vidal interposes a secular and sceptical view of history informed by his political and satirical portrayals of Christianity in fiction.

We move, now, to the two Fords. These examples demonstrate that when the writer is less well known, the opening pages, instead of containing an official literary blurb, offer a space for alternative means of legitimation via a more condensed and focused selection of critical reviews – compared to those we saw in Vidal's summary – that favour and promote the work and style of an author. In both these novels, the biographies appear at the back, and are much shorter than those of

[553] Waugh: 1963, 159; see also 77-80, where Waugh satirises Gibbon's portrayal of Helena and the martyrs.
[554] Foucault: 1980b, 128.
[555] See Vidal: 1964.
[556] Ibid., vi.
[557] Personal experience of politics, as well as travelling to historical sites, were cited by Polybius as necessary for the historian to write a good history (see Walbank: 1979, 23); Waugh and Vidal, respectively, tick both of these, showing that paratextual summaries frame novelists as invested in these same ideas.
[558] See Vidal: 1964.

Waugh and Vidal. I will deal with them only briefly, before turning to the endorsements on the first page. The summary at the rear of *The Dragon Waiting* lists John Ford's literary awards, notably those in fantasy and science fiction. Taken together with other paratexts citing the historical setting of the story, this summary reinforces the genre classification of the novel as one of alternative history. Michael Ford's biography, meanwhile, is less typical for a historical novelist (in that it does not list any credentials in historical writing, aside from the fact he now works as a translator), and shares more similarity with general fiction in listing birthplace, workplace, and family details. This may seem unusual in light of the style already encountered in Waugh and Vidal, but it appears less so when contrasted with the opening pages of the novel. Here the reader finds extensive praise lavished on both Ford as a historical novelist, and his previous historical novel, *The Ten Thousand*.

If a historical novelist is relatively unknown, or does not wish to be known, then in place of a biography, their authority stems from their apparent mastery over previous historical periods. Walter Scott, to protect his literary standing, did not append his name to his early historical novels. Following the publication of *Waverley*, Scott signed off his other works "by the author of *Waverley*."[559] This signature, along with early reviews of the historical novel and recent trends in consumer psychology, established a precedent for the reviews of *The Ten Thousand* to appear inside Ford's *Gods and Legions*, for a correlation between them to be established. The reviews in Ford's *Gods and Legions* chart continuity between Ford's older work, set a thousand years earlier, and this novel, which the blurb says takes place in late antiquity. The reader is presented with a synopsis of Ford's brand of historical fiction, an indication of its style and content, which is designed to build confidence across the different products.[560] "The descriptive language throughout is heroic, at times echoing the *Iliad*," writes *Kirkus Reviews*; "*The Ten Thousand* may lead many readers back to the original [Xenophon's *Anabasis*]." Meanwhile, the historical novelist James Brady claims that "Ford's work is illuminated by scholarship," while Professor Victor Hanson notes it is "historically sound" but also "very human." Ford's novel, he suggests, makes "Xenopon's tale come alive in a way that no ancient historian or classicist has yet accomplished," a sentiment echoed by *The Statesmen*: "[this] book makes the reader feel the story has been lived, not merely read."[561]

These reviews demonstrate what is often apparent in other media paratexts, such as the credit sequences of films and games, namely, that there is a "multiplication of authorizing figures

[559] For more on this, see Genette: 1997, 43-45.
[560] Genette: 1997, 97-99 explores the multiple places where the genre of a work can be repeated, and notes the "list of works 'By the same author'" can be especially "captivating" in this respect; while I do not have space here to discuss this additional paratext, it is worth noting that Vidal's *Julian* includes such a list.
[561] For this and the above quotations, see Ford: 2002; see also Abbott: 2008, 31 on book jacket recommendations and how they might influence reader behaviour.

behind a single text."[562] Reviewers present the story, with both their words and affiliations directing the reception of its contents. These voices give shape to the story, situating Ford's work in relation to institutional authority and author affiliation. The same is true of the reviews at the start of John Ford's *The Dragon Waiting*. Here, well-known authors of science fiction such as Roger Zelazny and Poul Anderson offer their thoughts on the imaginative force of the narrative. Others, such as Gene Wolfe, signpost the fantastic nature of the historical novel, and help set up expectations regarding precisely how Ford will balance these opposing elements. In Wolfe's words, this is "The best mingling of history with historical magic that I have ever seen."[563] From the first pages of these novels, it is possible to gain an appreciation of their subject, what qualities the author can bring to the story, and who recommends them and why. In the case of historical fiction, these are important indications that not only help to market the book, but also help to transmit a particular way of reading 'history' in historical fiction. In John Ford's *The Dragon Waiting*, this means accepting the 'mingling' of history and magic as per the fantasy genre, undergoing a suspension of disbelief, but also relating what happens in the story back to knowledge of what really happened, in order to appreciate how the novel deviates from established history.[564] Similarly, in Michael Ford's *Gods and Legions*, the reviews of *The Ten Thousand* reveal that the history in the novel is carefully researched, accurate, and pays homage to the Classics, while its use, for the reader, lies in its immersive qualities, which distinguish it from source material and academic history. These external reviews offer a procedure to imagine and interpret the presence of history in the story, helping to "transform the narrative without, at the same time, changing a single word of it."[565]

Doherty's *Murder Imperial* and Waters' *The Philosopher Prince* demonstrate yet another means of introducing the author, this time through a short summary, followed by a 'praise for' selection of quotes, much like those we saw above. The juxtaposition of an academic biography with critical reviews helps, in this instance, to "draw attention to the discontinuities of discourse" produced under a historical novelist's name, highlighting the different properties that historical credentials and imaginative fiction bring to the novel, the way they construct a layered narrative.[566] In *Murder Imperial*, Doherty is signalled out for his doctorate in history from Oxford University, while Waters is introduced as "a well-travelled classicist ... educated in Britain."[567] This formula, as Genette has shown, is not limited to the historical novel. [568] The *placement* of it, however, contrasted with

[562] Birke and Christ: 2013, 71-73.
[563] Ford: 1983; the reviews can be found in the 2008 edition.
[564] For more on how counterfactual historical novels signpost their changes, see Phillips: 2013, 209-221.
[565] Abbott: 2008, 31.
[566] I am indebted here to Wake: 2016, 86, though I move beyond his example of narrative history, making use of the paratexts of historical novels to show how the discontinuity of discourse is apparent in the book itself.
[567] See Doherty: 2003 and Waters: 2011.
[568] Genette: 1997, 54; see also Yáñez-Bouza: 2016, 56.

the fictional frames evoked by the reviews that follow, shows that we are not just dealing with vanity or aggrandisement, but something deeper. The appearance of an author's historical credentials in a piece of historical fiction may seem trite or inconsequential, but considering its widespread prominence in contemporary publishing, it validates Foucault's idea that the 'author function' manifests itself according to the requirements of the age.[569] Contemporary authors who have institutionally accredited learning in history, it is implied, are entitled to write historical fiction; their learning signals uniformity across the genre in terms of content, accuracy, and style.[570] After bearing witness to the learning of Doherty and Waters, the reader moves on to hear of how Doherty's novels are filled with "adventure," possessing "strong plot[s] and bold characterisation," "a lively sense of history," "teem[ing] with colour, energy and spills."[571] The historical novels of Waters are similarly celebrated: "A masterpiece that deserves to become one of the classics of historical fiction," "A breathtaking trip to the past," "elegant and poetic."[572] These appraisals, from magazines, newspapers, and authors, focus on the fictional thrust of Doherty and Waters' work, how the historical *fiction* engages the reader, adding something more to events. What these pages show is that 'fiction' and 'history' do not just meet in the title of the genre, but also in the author (as generated by summaries and reviews). The first pages of these novels demonstrate how the author sits at a crossroads between a narrative of antiquity grounded in research, and a historically-inspired story brought to life through literary skill and imagination.[573]

The potency of this 'author function', in terms of how it allows the names and characters of Doherty and Waters to make sense of historical fiction, is such that when attempting to compare what these authors have achieved, reviewers cite further, often more famous, historical novelists as exempla.[574] Historical novelists themselves thus become sites where apparently irreconcilable concepts come together to produce texts united by a similar relationship, purpose, and approach to historical representation.[575] As names and literary frames that contain both biographical detail and praise for their fiction, Doherty and Waters therefore help to mark out what historical fiction *is* (a well-researched story written by a trained professional that immerses readers in the past), and how

[569] Foucault: 1980b, 123-128; Genette: 1997, 54 made a similar point when referring to his father, who used to style himself a "'user of gas,'" and how this might be meaningless to us now, but in his father's time, identified him as someone "well off and distinguished."
[570] Groot: 2009, 12-13.
[571] Doherty: 2003.
[572] Waters: 2011.
[573] Wake: 2016, 86.
[574] Margaret George in Waters: 2011 cites Mary Renault as a comparison.
[575] Foucault: 1980b, 123.

it might be recognised (through similar summaries and reviews).[576] These pages reaffirm the requirements readers have come to expect of the authors of the genre.

In all these examples, I have been grappling with the existence of information about the author, given through either direct biography or indirect reviews, in works *by* the author. These summaries and reviews are undoubtedly part of the work in question, but are clearly not written or even authorised by the author. As Genette wrote, "It seems to me ... that with respect to the cover and title page, it is the publisher who presents the author ... If the author is the guarantor of the text ... this guarantor himself has a guarantor – the publisher."[577] Publishers are responsible, not only for aiding the reader in identifying the genre of the book, but also for developing a 'brand' identity for the author and their appropriation of the past through summaries and reviews.[578]

[576] Gray: 2010, 109.
[577] Genette: 1997, 46.
[578] Garritzen: 2012, 414.

§4 Cartography

"I am amused when I see that not one of all the people who have drawn maps of the world has set it out sensibly."[579]

– Herodotus

"But if you pause and examine it carefully, you become convinced that each place in the carpet corresponds to a place in the city and all the things contained in the city are included in the design, arranged according to their true relationship, which escapes your eye distracted by the bustle ... the carpet proves that there is a point from which the city shows its true proportions."[580]

– Italo Calvino

Not all works of historical fiction require a map, but most maps of the Roman Empire and other popular historic localities can be found in fiction. Readers may browse a map of the later Roman Empire in seven of the novels in my case study, and in the performance notes of one of the plays, making that half of the total. Most have only one map, usually a two-page spread of the empire, found either before or after other preliminary paratexts, such as the preface or character list. Some, rarely, contain two, with the second focusing on a specific province. The purpose of these maps seems obvious: to provide a concrete point of historical (and readerly) reference, which follows on from and supports the allusions already encountered in other paratexts. Maps act as an anchor point for the reader, who can turn back at any point to re-familiarise themselves with the layout of Rome, no matter how many times the story jumps from place to place. As with any paratext, though, the work these maps do, along with their capacity to be variously and continuously interpreted, reveals them to be complex entities that synthesise specific historical content and concepts that go on to frame the contents to follow. Maps frame the type of Rome imaginable, and in the process reveal the unstable and potentially subversive qualities inherent in such representations. I want to consider three interrelated ways of reading the maps (Figures 13-21) below. The first investigates the history and purpose of cartography. The second is interested in how maps receive, contain, and mediate historical themes, while the third analyses all nine maps together, in order to examine their role as effective simulacra; images that have become real substitutes for a historical entity, but have no basis in that reality, nor any means of being judged against it.

I have grouped the maps into three categories; those that represent a part of the empire in late antiquity, in this case, Britannia (Figures 13-14), maps that depict Europe and the Near East during the third and early fourth century CE (Figures 15-17), and maps that cover the same territory in the later fourth century (Figures 18-21). As we will see, the choice of period, and in particular the choice of historical figure, significantly affects the messages received, as each work carves out its

[579] Herodotus, *The Histories*, 4.36.2.
[580] Calvino: 1997, 86.

story both in words, and also in images. I will explore the three approaches outlined above using these nine examples, starting with the purpose of maps, and their use across history.

In his essay On the *Impossibility of Drawing a Map of the Empire on a Scale of 1 to 1*, Eco suggests that whatever a map's size, it must be "a semiotic tool."[581] Eco's essay is a playful investigation of the practicalities of Borges' well-known fable, where, to achieve exactitude, members of the Cartographers Guild strike "a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it."[582] In his essay, Eco points out that even on such a scale, the map must be capable "of signifying the empire or of allowing references to the empire, especially in those instances where the empire is not otherwise perceptible."[583] We use maps to navigate space as it exists around us, to move from one place to another, often via the easiest and/or quickest route. Maps hold a privileged function in terms of signifying the real.[584] Figures 13-21 refer to reality in much the same way, offering depictions of Britain/Europe/the Near East indebted to the contemporary norms of spatial representation found in modern travel maps. What complicates matters is that Figures 13-21 conjure past reality, which no longer exists, politically or physically. Despite Rome's longevity in the historical and cultural imagination, its empire, much like the map in Borges' fable, lies in "Tattered Ruins."[585] These maps use modern equivalents to make tangibly present the geographical reach, scale, and shape of ancient Rome at its height, deploying tools we customarily associate with space as it exists today to turn back the clock and situate antiquity as the destination. Maps, therefore, are complex geographical and temporal constructs that help readers negotiate their sense of space in time, and how they interrelate.

I began this section with an epigraph from Calvino's *Invisible Cities*. In this short work of fiction, Marco Polo describes fantastic and improbable places to the emperor Kublai Khan. One of them, Eudoxia, contains a map-like carpet of the city. Calvino explores how this 'map', which does not, and cannot look like Eudoxia, being two-dimensional, manages to show its true nature. The paradox of the map is that in capturing the city from above, frozen in a single moment, it describes the relationship between its constituent parts, something much harder to experience in the city itself when faced with its perpetual motion and distractions. This "immobile order", the ability to capture the essential configuration of the world and human effects upon it, be they cities or empires – and all this in spite of the mutability of space and time – is what has made maps so attractive, and

[581] See Echo: 1995, 97.
[582] See Borges: 2000, 181, *On Exactitude in Science*; this short story is itself a meditation on a passage from Lewis Carroll's novel *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, which explores the same idea of a 1 to 1 scale map.
[583] Echo: 1995, 97.
[584] See Muehrcke and Muehrcke: 1974, 318-319; see also Wake: 2016, 91.
[585] Borges: 2000, 181.

explains their place in cultural imagination, from the Hellenistic era to today.[586] During the Roman Republic, images of the known world were publicly accessible, displayed in temples, colonnades, and during triumphs, when representations of conquered lands were used as part of the procession. Maps acted as testament to Rome's power, an icon of its *imperium*. Projections of the Empire were drawn up as far back as the third century BCE. Caesar expanded on them, followed by Agrippa (working for Augustus), but it was not until the second century CE that they were canonised by the famous mathematician Claudius Ptolemy. His *Geography* captured not only space in time, but dominion over that space at a certain point in time. In the later empire, maps were on display in imperial residences, such as Constantine's palace at Trier, which may have housed a complete map of the empire for suppliants to see.[587] These maps, as part of imperial representation, symbolised the power Rome exerted by detailing the imperial road network connecting the great cities. Successive iterations, such as the Peutinger Table, provide an example of this.[588]

After the division of the empire in the West, cartography continued to play an important role, as Christian writers mapped the Holy Land alongside Biblical events, while later societies, both European and Arabic, received, adapted, and expanded Ptolemy's maps. The invention of print furthered public interest in cartography, allowing for the accurate reproduction and widespread dissemination of historical (rather than religious or Classical) maps in works of literature.[589] We find scholars reimagining what empires were like at their height, and accompanying their work with recreations of historic space; Thomas Hobbes and Edward Gibbon provided supplementary maps, the former for his translation of Thucydides, and the latter to help contextualise his history of the later Roman Empire.[590] Gibbon further required his reader keep a copy of Jean Baptist Bourguignon d'Anville's atlas to hand when poring over his history, demonstrating how important the relationship between history and geography had become by the eighteenth century.[591] Public interest in atlases and the cartography of the classical and medieval past continued apace, developing in parallel with the emerging discipline of history. Maps provided a complementary means to engage with – and relive – the past, now understood as its own distinct temporal realm, a concept that was intrinsically tied to the rise of public interest in history and the historical novel.[592] Maps began appearing in

[586] Calvino: 1997, 86; see Dilke: 1985 for an exploration of the extensive use of maps in the ancient world; see also Holliday: 1997, 137-145 and Nicolet: 1991, 5-9 for Hellenistic maps and Roman cartographic innovations, and Walbank: 1979, 18-19 who considers Polybius' contribution to geography.
[587] For the existence of maps in the Roman Republic, see Dilke: 1985, 39-54; for the representation of place during a triumph, see Plutarch, *Life of Pompey*, 45; for more on the maps at Trier, see Potter: 2013, 52.
[588] See Albu: 2014, 1-30 on the Peutinger Table and Roman perceptions of space; see also Nicolet: 1991, 3-12, who explores how the key players of the late Republic conceived of the empire spatially.
[589] See Black 6-7; see also Dilke: 1985, 155-182 on developments in cartography after the fall of Rome.
[590] Black: 2000, 9.
[591] Gibbon: 1998, 835 (Chapter 50, Note 2).
[592] See Black: 2000, 1-26.

historical fiction around the end of the nineteenth century, as novelists, inspired by the remapping of nationalistic borders, drew on the model offered by scholarship to represent past space. In the following century, maps cemented their place in the opening pages of fiction.[593]

Mak recently noted that, "Paratexts shape the page graphically and cognitively."[594] Maps have shaped the historical novel by supplementing a predominantly textual reconstruction of the past with graphic images that, unlike illustrations or cover images, were already strongly associated with the discourse of history, and especially its object of study. The inclusion of maps works hard to mirror Gibbon's requirement that readers have maps to hand when learning about the past. The graphic and cognitive functions of maps are intertwined. What we see in historical fiction is not just an appropriation of devices found in narrative history (though that is certainly part of it), but also the author and publisher's interest in experimenting with the authenticating gesture of maps, the way representations of space elide time. Maps may exist as general reference points, but they are also spatial guides for the historical manoeuvres *within* the story.[595] They become part of the past-present of the story, part of its historical contents.[596] At the same time, they direct this content, determining the type of past readers experience, highlighting such things as 'barbarian invasions' (Figure 16), military campaigns (Figures 18, 19, and 21), and the array of Roman settlements. Maps provide an additional layer of engagement and demonstrate how historical fiction draws in diverse representations that impact both the contents of the story, as well as the reader's conception of history. Readers have come to know Rome through their exposure to maps, ones that require them to fill the available static space with the machinations of gods and emperors, warring factions and the marching of legions. Films often do this work for the audience by overlaying a map of the ancient world with moving images, music, voice-over, and text.[597] More recently still, video games such as the Rome Total War franchise structure the player's entire gaming experience around an interactive map of the empire. Maps of the Roman Empire set the scene in the audience's imagination by acting as focal points for a whole range of intertextual and extratextual allusions.

[593] See Groot: 2010, 84, Muehrcke and Muehrcke: 1974, 317-318, and Moretti: 1999, 34-47.
[594] Mak: 2011, 7.
[595] Examples of recent scholarly works on late antiquity that include maps before the narrative begins include Clark: 2011, xvi-xvii and Potter: 2013, ix-xv.
[596] For more on maps as 'fictive' rather than 'fictional', see Wake: 2016, 93 and Munslow: 2007, 13 and 134.
[597] See, for example, the title sequences of Antoine Fuqua's *King Arthur*, Oliver Stone's *Alexander*, and Wolfgang Peterson's *Troy*; the title sequence of Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* refers to the geographic reach of Rome, and although there is a map, it appears later in the film, after the opening battle sequence.

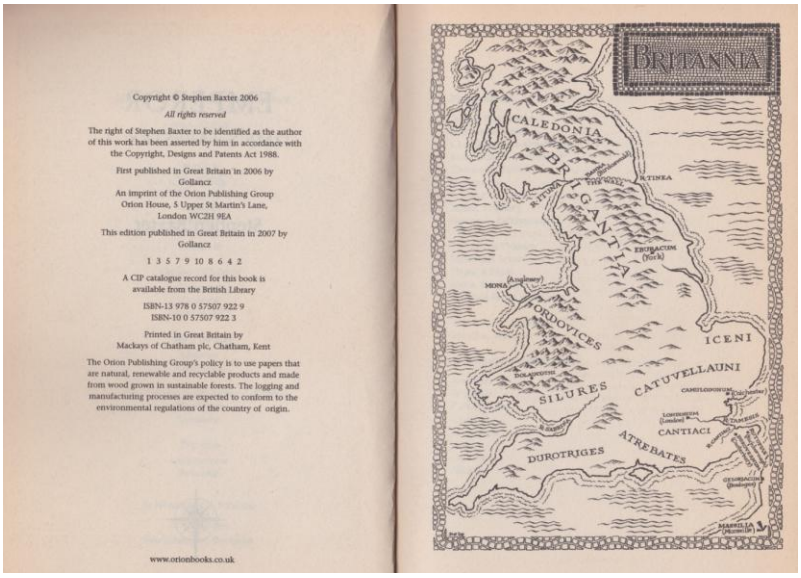

Figure 13: Map from 'Emperor' (Baxter 2007)

Let us think about what historical attitudes and themes are made apparent in maps. In the first place, what each of these maps offers its audience is a god's-eye-view of the Roman Empire at various historical moments. They encourage the reader to look at human activity as it plays out against the landscape, a privileged perspective traditionally reserved for the gods in Greek epic, and later for the historian.[598] In *How to Write History*, the Greek satirist Lucian wrote that historians "must be like Zeus in Homer, looking now at the land of the horse-reading Thracians, now at that of the Mysians ... and explain how they seemed to him from on high."[599] Maps suggest a similar approach to interpreting the historical contents of the story, enabling readers to read across the empire, to think in terms of empire-wide disputes and sweeping changes. Figure 13 offers a god's-eye-view of Britain, signifying the importance of the Isles as a setting. What is interesting about this overview is that it combines multiple eras of Britain (pre and post-Roman) in one image, attempting to capture the narrative thrust of the story, which covers a four-hundred year span. The map's transliterations of Celtic tribal groups 'others' the Britain the reader may know. By naming and placing different tribal groups, the map indicates space as it was perceived before the Roman state imposed itself. In doing so, the map, with its mountainous topography, alludes to the 'wild' past of Britain, preparing the reader for the novel's depiction of a 'pre-civilised' Britain. Meanwhile, the decision to name certain key cities in the south (London and Colchester) alludes to a growing Roman presence that, thanks to the illustration of Hadrian's Wall in the north, hints at the dramatic changes to come. The map, then, identifies distinct eras of Roman rule according to nomenclature, topography, and landmarks, overlaying each to create a palimpsest for Roman Britain. The privileged overview that this map provides not only allows readers to turn back the clock and read across the

[598] See Purves: 2010, 34-37 and 114 for more on this narrative trope.
[599] Lucian, *How to Write History*, 49.

island, but also to read across its complex historical strata, to focus on different layers at different moments in the story as it traces the history of a family living in Britain from 4BCE to 418CE. By mapping Roman Britain onto a modern conceptual image of Britain, the map shows how readers are encouraged to 'unearth' its national past, shown to lie beneath familiar spaces.

Figure 14, meanwhile, paints a picture of a distinctly 'Romanised' Britain, evidenced by the date on the map, and the cities that have sprung up across the land. This map is accompanied by Figure 15, a full map of the empire, which suggests that while Britain is going to be important, events there will have implications on a larger scale. The page turn required to relate the two maps is useful as it encourages us to consider the effects of moving between these representations. While both provide a god's-eye-view of their respective territories, one is a part of the whole. Relating individual events to a whole shares a framing precedent with the 'universal' history of the Greek historian Polybius. Writing about the rise of the Roman Empire, he asserted that "from this point onwards history becomes an organic whole."[600] More, he suggested that "it is only by combining and comparing the various parts of the whole ... that we shall arrive at a comprehensive view, and thus encompass both the practical benefits and the pleasures that the reading of history affords."[601] His sentiment was echoed by Lucian, who said the historian must provide both an "individual look" at

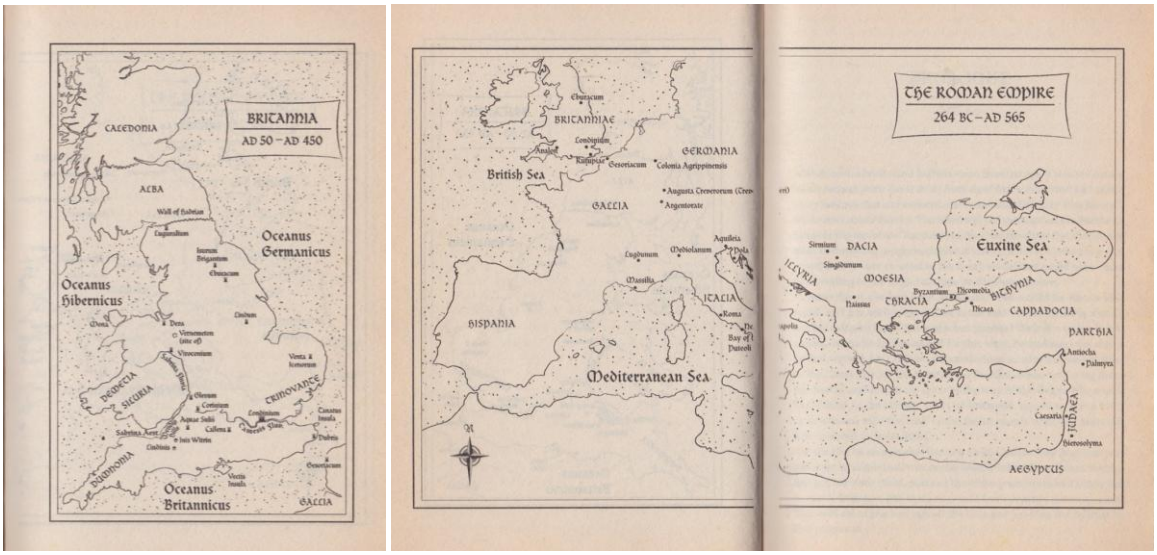

Figure 14 and 15: Maps from 'Priestess of Avalon' (Bradley and Paxson 2011)

events, while also retaining the ability to "fly" between countries "so as not to miss any crisis."[602] Bradley and Paxson's novel is concerned with the life of the empress Helena, from her apocryphal birth in Britain to her influence over world affairs, both as a mystical priestess (the novel's fantasy element), and as the mother of the emperor Constantine "whose light will blaze across the

[600] Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 1.3; for more on this, see Walbank: 1979, 21-24.
[601] Ibid., 1.4.
[602] Lucian, *How to Write History*, 49-50.

world."[603] The map of the empire alongside Britain encourages us to see "the causal relationship between one event and another," between Helena's upbringing and her imperial destiny.[604] The maps modulate between the two, refocusing distance from events as they unfold. The reader experiences the immediacy of the past, from which they draw pleasure, and its wider implications, which connects to learning. This is important, since as we have seen, emperors and empresses take centre stage in reconstructions of Rome. Maps allow us to grasp their impact as historical agents, providing a reference point for the rise and fall of dynasties, a sense of history as the domain of conquest by great figures, complementing the story's elaboration of their deeds.[605] This movement sets up reading strategies necessary and typical to historical novels, which segue from location to location in an attempt to cover events and their context on a historical scale. We will see how this movement is sustained by intertitles and place names, but it is already apparent here.

Figure 21: Map from the performance notes of 'Emperor and Galilean' (Ibsen 2011)

In Figure 21, for example, the places where the action will take place are identified in a key. This key is appended to an expansive map of the empire created for the recent adaptation of Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean*. The play is concerned with the life of the emperor Julian, and how he influences, straddles, and enables the "transition from Greek to Christian culture … the violence unleashed by the death of one civilization and the birth of a new one." The subtitle of *Emperor and Galilean* ("A World-Historical Play") shows how the 'universal' history of Rome has become a metonym for 'world' history.[606] While the map is a modern addition supplementing the performance of the play, it reiterates Ibsen's original subtitle, not only in terms of the geographical reach of the story, but also in terms of its legacy, how its themes encourage readers to reflect on world-wide

[603] From the blurb to Bradley and Paxson: 2011.
[604] Walbank: 1979, 24.
[605] This idea of history has been around since Herodotus, see Dewald: 1998, xii.
[606] See Moi: 2011.

religious conflict today. This idea is picked up later in the performance notes, with articles showing how clashes between religions have ramified through history and remain worryingly present due to sectarian discord and armed conflict between Christians, Muslims, and Jews. More, the map echoes Ibsen's concern as to "whether human beings have the power to shape history, or whether history has a will of its own."[607] With Julian's narrative route carved out on the map, his historical destiny is made apparent; he is, it appears, the "mere plaything of the powers of history."[608]

While on the subject of the idea of Rome in world history, it is worth examining Figures 15-21 for their consistency in representing the empire and its surroundings. While each map is bound to contain similarities, the type of shading used to distinguish the empire from its surroundings remains uniform across the maps (whether in the form of colour or boundary markers), indicating the existence of a canon of idiosyncrasies. This, along with the detailed use of place names within the empire, and the lack of place names without, reinforces century-old distinctions between what is understood as the 'civilised' world, and the 'non-Roman' or 'barbarian' land beyond.[609] These graphic markers differentiate and even erase (note the empty space in Figures 15, 16, and 20) the

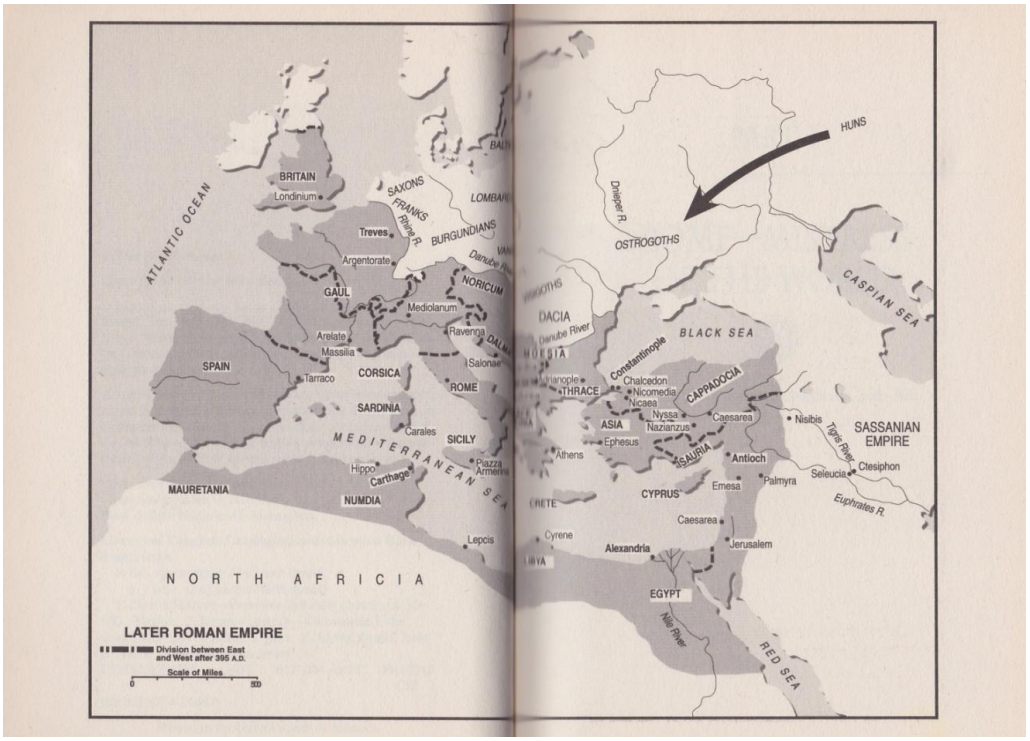

Figure 16: Map from 'In This Sign Conquer' (Brand 1996)

[607] Ibid..
[608] Ibid..
[609] For more on this division as it was conceived by the Greeks and Romans, see Gillett: 2009, see also Romm: 1998, 85-97 on how Herodotus draws lines between the intelligence and language of Greeks and non-Greeks.

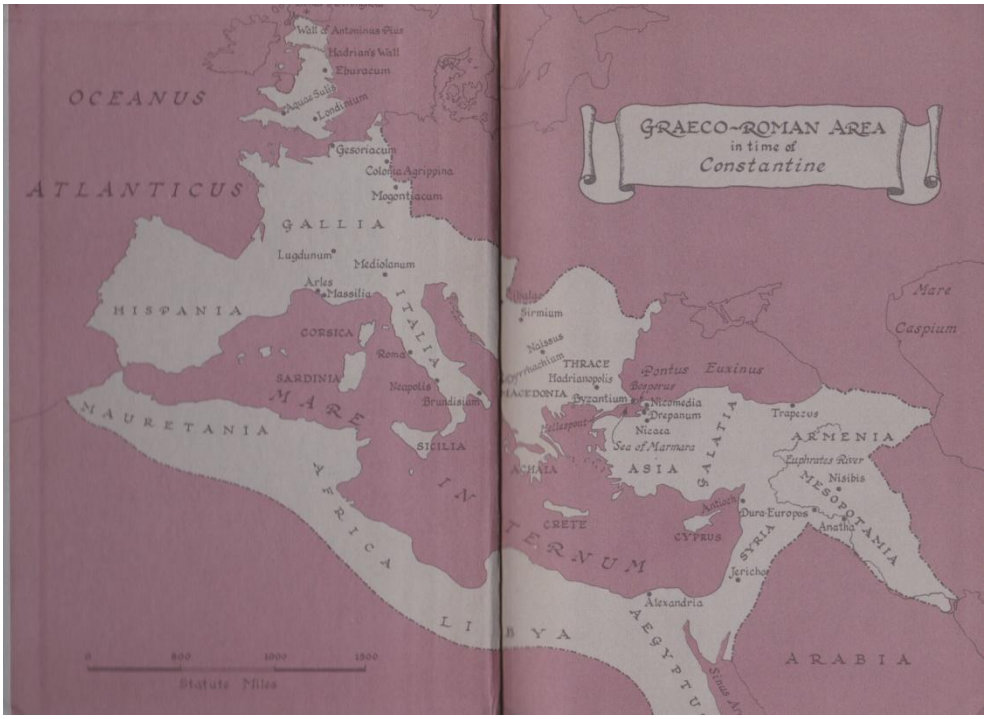

*Figure 17: Map from 'Constantine: The Miracle of the Flaming Cross' (*Slaughter 1968)

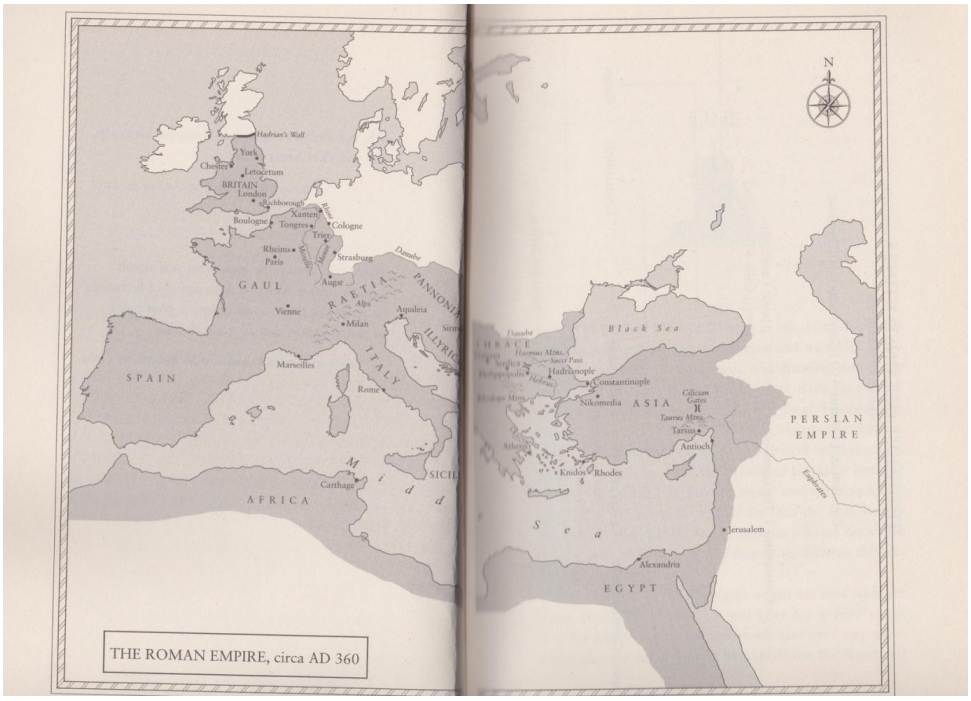

*Figure 20: Map from 'The Philosopher Prince' (*Waters 2011)

history, importance, and ultimately the existence of cultures outside the empire. The maps present a thoroughly Romano-centric viewpoint, which accordingly marks certain features as important (Roman cities, boundaries, and military campaigns), and others not. This has a significant effect on the content and concept of history they transmit, with the maps presenting the cartographical equivalent of 'history is written by the victors'. The maps transmit the world-view of Rome (the dominant power) and its leaders, as in Figures 15-17, which frame a story about the Emperor

Constantine. Although Constantine began as a usurper and only managed to reunite the empire after decades of shared rule and civil war, the maps forego such geopolitical matters in favour of presenting the reader with a unified empire. In this, they foreshadow Constantine's significance as one of the few sole rulers in late antiquity, and, depending on when the story begins, his character development, marking an outcome that will be picked up in intertitles.

An even more striking case of foreshadowing can be found in Figures 18, 19, and 21.[610] These maps frame stories that revolve around the emperor Julian. There is little to differentiate these maps from those set during Constantine's earlier rise to power, apart from the added detail to the East, spreading into Persian territory. This detail is important for a number of reasons. By highlighting the military application of maps, their importance for campaigning, the arrows reinforce the central military theme of Ford's novel (Figure 19) and Ibsen's play (Figure 21), already signalled by other paratexts. For Vidal (Figures 18), the military reading might be less obvious, but the arrows still establish the expectation of a journey. Either way, the lines prefigure the route the narrative will take. While most marks on a map represent topographical features or human edifices, the arrows in

Figure 18: Map from 'Julian' (Vidal 1964)

[610] I exclude Figure 20 from the following discussion because, although Waters' novel is about Julian, the narrative ends when Julian becomes sole emperor, and thus avoids representing his death in Persia.

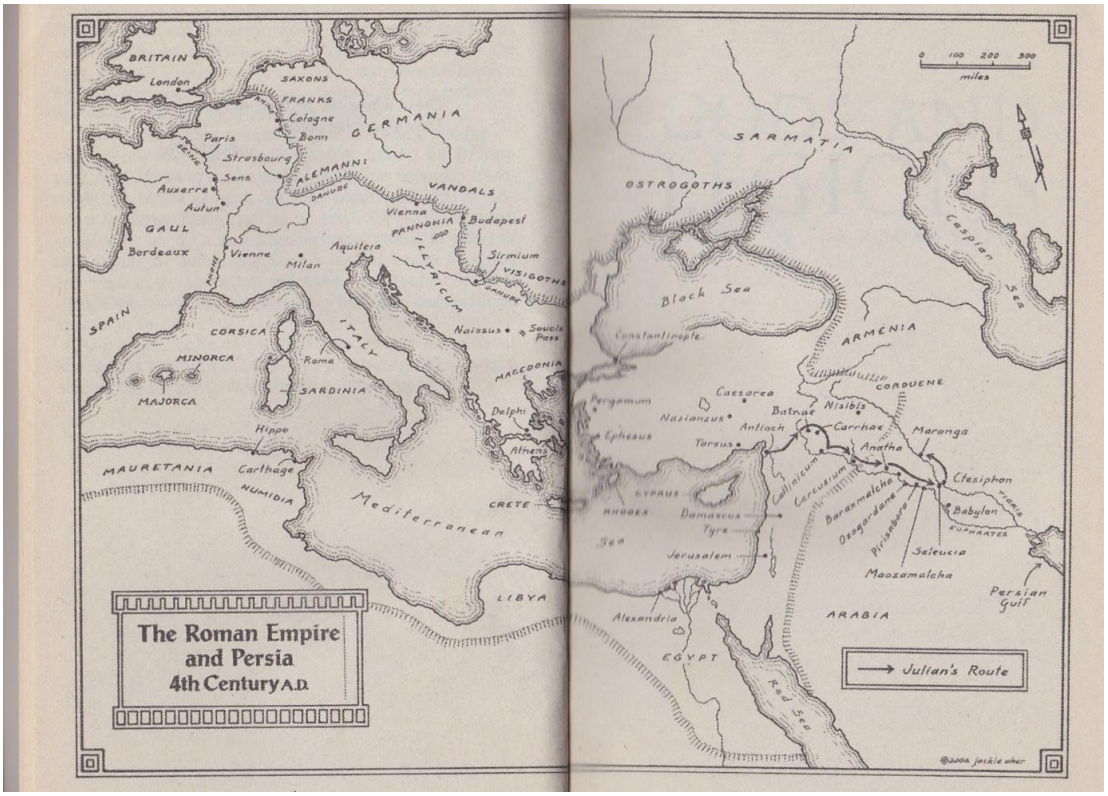

Figure 19: Map from 'Gods and Legions' (Ford 2002)

Figures 18, 19, and 21 do not correlate with anything that would have been visible. They depict Julian's movement as it was later perceived by those who mapped out his route through Persia.[611] These maps effectively 'spoil' the story.[612] The level of 'spoiling' depends on the reader's prior knowledge. While the arrows end in Persia, unless there are other markers to link these to Julian's failed campaign, the reader might not initially make the connection between the arrows and Julian's death. When they do, it becomes clear that the arrows chart Julian's destiny.

In spoiling Julian's narrative before it has begun, these maps connect to a long-standing tradition that has interpreted the emperor through his final campaign.[613] In the map to Ibsen's play, this is even more marked, with the "Persian Wars" taking up the entire fourth act. I will return to this in Chapter 3, so as to consider how maps transmit a memory of Julian. It is enough here to conclude by saying that maps encapsulate "both the geographical and temporal start and end points of the narrative in a single image."[614] To this I will add the thematic, contextual, and imaginative openings and endings. The maps of Britain not only highlight the setting of the novels, but in prefacing stories

[611] See Wake: 2016, 92 on how maps represent space (and movement) according to viewpoint.
[612] This is not meant to imply any value judgement on the potential appreciation of the story by the reader, as Gray argues: "the long history of storytelling suggest that unspoiled narratives are far less common than spoiled ones – from *Oedipus Rex* to *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Odyssey* to any historical narrative, many of our culture's most revered stories are "spoiled" from the outset," see Gray: 2010, 144-174.
[613] This can be traced back to Ammianus Marcellinus, who devoted a disproportional number of books of his history of the late Roman Empire to the campaign and its outcome.
[614] Wake: 2016, 92.

on the empress Helena, famous for her place in British legend, they situate themselves within an existing tradition, both contextualising the story, and helping to set up imaginative resonance between story, place, and character. Whether maps represent a part of the empire, the whole, or detail a specific event, what they do is bookend the narrative. By taking up full two-page spreads, or acting as endpapers (as in Figure 17), maps provide iconic support for the words contained within, buttressing the story. They help readers to know at what point in time and space they are reliving, and at what point that relationship comes to a close. Maps structure encounters with history and its referent, and it is worth thinking about their lasting effect on the imagination.

I want to finish by exploring how all nine maps taken together demonstrate the work that goes on behind the scenes in referring readers to ancient Rome, how maps can be thought of as aporia, artefacts full of internal contradictions. Figures 13-21 suture past space to present space, thereby grounding representations of the past and authorising various ways to interpret the historical contents of the story. They are, much like history itself "both the object of a study and the study itself."[615] The scale reduction of maps enables readers to see how events unfolded in a way that "could never be seen through direct observation."[616] Much like the inhabitants of Eudoxia, who gain only an "incomplete perspective" while moving through the city, but come to see the "true relationship" between its parts in the map, so the reader is presented with the chance to look back through the layers of history, to see patterns and meaning. As Polybius wrote, "A preliminary grasp of the whole is of great service in enabling us to master the details."[617] Maps, placed ahead of the story, empower readers to conceive of the stage before the characters enter, to discern their entries and the effects they have, and to contemplate their impression after they leave. In this way, maps in historical fiction connect a character-driven approach to historical reconstruction – the importance invested by the genre and its paratexts in individuals, either as representatives of change, or its primary instigators – with the 'universal' stage of history epitomised by a transparent map of modern Europe and the Near East that makes visible its interconnected Roman heritage. This paradoxical image speaks of the need to represent a clearly identifiable backdrop, with Figures 15-21 eliding important changes in the division of the empire in favour of an institution that appears the same across the centuries. Maiorino argued that "cartographic representations are better known than the original places."[618] When it comes to historical space, this is all but inevitable; maps *cannot but precede* that space, since it would be impossible to experience it otherwise.

[615] Nicolet: 1991, 3.
[616] Muehrcke and Muehrcke: 1974, 337.
[617] Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 3.1.
[618] Maiorino: 2008, 198.

While maps appear to be "contracts of non-fiction," they are, like historical fiction in general, a fiction framed historically.[619] Baudrillard spoke of the blurring of boundaries between abstraction and reality, where simulations create "a real without origin or reality." He suggested that maps could precede their territory, further, that they could "engender" place. Figures 15-21 give rise to Rome in the imagination; they cause it to exist in relation to the story. By doing so, these maps exemplify Baudrillard's machine that "offers all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes."[620] Figures 15-21 are an "*invocation* of resemblance," and yet they visualise something incomparable and far removed from the metamorphoses that Rome was subject to.[621] This is, in part, because "the exact duplication of a geographical setting is impossible," and therefore what maps really represent is a metaphor, or even metonym, for the past.[622] This tension between the real in maps and their metaphoric quality is summarised at the close of Calvino's short story, where the inhabitants of Eudoxia demand an oracle explain the connection between their city and its map. The oracular response was that "One of the two objects ... has the form the gods gave the starry sky and the orbits in which the world revolve; the other is an approximate reflection, like every human creation."[623] The answer can be interpreted in three ways; first, that the map is a divine creation, a perfect distribution of space and movement in time, while what it represents (empire or city) is a chaotic human endeavour. Equally, the answer could imply the opposite, that the empire embodies the ordered chaos of the cosmos, while any attempt to capture this will inevitably fall short, being made by human hands. I believe, however, that a third answer presents itself; that the map can be both, a human device that captures the shape of creation, like a star-chart, or in this case, a map that synthesises historical fidelity with order to create a perfect image of empire.[624] This order is frozen in a moment, but comes to be seen as *the* way the empire appeared. The persistence of maps in historical fiction speaks of their ability to be used not just as a referent for Rome, but in place of Rome. The maps become the Rome remembered, and are one of many reality portals through which readers pass on their way to experiencing the past as it is retold in fiction.

[619] Wake: 2016, 91.
[620] Baudrillard: 1994, 1-2.
[621] Ibid., 45.
[622] See Groot: 2010, 84 and Muehrcke and Muehrcke: 1974, 319.
[623] Calvino: 1997, 86-87.
[624] Baudrillard: 1994, 47-48.

§5 Character Lists, Contents, Epigraphs

"[*The Count of Carmagnola*] is preceded by some historical notes on the character and the events that form its subject. I conceived such a premise thinking that whoever resolves to read a work resulting from the mixture of historical truth and fiction may like to be able, without lengthy inquiries, to discern what was preserved in it of the real facts."[625]

– Alessandro Manzoni

Character lists tell the reader who will feature in the story, and prepares them in some way for that encounter. Taking their cue from the *dramatis personae* in drama, character lists have appeared over the last century in both literary and genre fiction, usually in works that deal with an extensive cast of characters, or with families that span generations.[626] They feature in seven out of sixteen works in my case study and can be found either before or after other preliminary paratexts, such as maps and prefaces. Unlike character lists that recount entirely fictional figures, those found in the genre do considerably more in terms of framing the historical contents of the novel, transmitting ideas of history, and engaging the historical imagination. Character lists present the critic with a unique opportunity to investigate these concepts through the three formulations they take, whether they appear as a list of annotated names, a table of contextualised figures complete with details of their relative fictional/historical nature, or an authenticated family tree.

Since character lists in drama are expected, I will begin with the two plays. Like most contemporary plays, Power's adaptation of Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean* includes two cast lists; the first identifies an actor with a character in the play, while the second lists the characters in the order they appear, along with information about their roles. I am interested in the second list, since it relates to the historicity of the characters, who they *were*, rather than who they will be portrayed by (though this would certainly be relevant to performance history).

Let us look at the generic Roman names in Power's list: 'Varro', 'Sallust', and 'Gallus' (identified as 'students').[627] These names foreground a Roman past, and work together with the dates at the bottom of the page (363AD [sic]), place names ('Messenger from Antioch,' 'Three Citizens of Constantinople') and the list of extras, made up of 'Roman soldiers' and 'Barbarians,' to create a precise geographical and temporal setting for the play. The character list also expands the scope of the title by establishing the imperial hierarchy under 'Constantius' and 'Julian,' supported by 'the Emperor's adviser,' in contrast to Christianised characters, including 'Peter,' the 'various churchgoers,' and 'Christian prisoners.' There are 'guards,' 'students,' the 'Voices of Two Spirits,' and a 'Pagan Singer.' What this amounts to is a breakdown of the dramatic moments in the play,

[625] Manzoni: [1820-1822] 2004, from the preface to *The Count of Carmagnola*.
[626] For example, *dramatis personae* appear in some form in Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones*, Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and Frank Herbert's *Dune*.
[627] Ibsen: 2011, 8; all subsequent references to the character list are from this page.

determined by the tension set up between groups of characters. There is Julian's lineage, the dynastic rivalry between him, the emperor Constantius, and Julian's brother, who, it is noted, is married to Constantius' sister, Helena. In the course of the play, this is a rivalry that will lead to Gallus' murder, Julian's marriage to Helena, a civil war between Julian and Constantius, and Julian's fleeting time as sole emperor. Alongside the dynastic struggles, the 'Christian prisoners' in close proximity to 'Roman soldiers' alludes to the deaths of Christian martyrs in the Roman arena, and foreshadows the role Julian will play as a persecutor, at least in the eyes of the Christian characters. Peter, for example, claims that Julian was sent "to come before us, to shake us to the true faith."[628] However, the presence of 'students' aligns Julian not with bloodthirsty persecutors, but a more rational, reasoned, free-thinking approach (Julian claims that "everything human, everything beautiful" is "forbidden" by Christianity), albeit one tempered by a fascination with theurgy, signalled by the 'Voices of Two Spirits.'[629] This is a result of 'Maximus'' influence, who tempts Julian with the possibilities of magic. Alongside the political and religious themes determined by the character list, the presence of 'Antioch,' 'Constantinople,' the 'Persian Stranger,' and the 'Persian soldiers' alludes to the historical importance of Julian's reign: his Eastern interests, failed campaign in Persia, and abrupt death, read in the play as a tragedy that leads to the triumph of Christianity over "human hearts" and the loss of our "inheritance."[630] The 'Persian soldiers', along with their Roman counterparts, further hint at the centrality of war to the play – reinforced by the title (the *Emperor* is associated with Earthly, military power) and by Julian's campaign, which, as we saw in the previous section, is mapped out separately in the performance notes.

The *dramatis personae* in Sayers' *The Emperor Constantine* is even more extensive than the one in *Emperor and Galilean*. The sheer number of characters gives the list the appearance of a contents page, while the order, set according to when characters appear on stage, establishes the teleology of the story. Since the preface, which describes the key political/religious conflicts explored in the play, comes before the list, in this case it informs a reading of the *dramatis personae*, creating a situation where the character list charts a thematic timeline. The reader begins in Britain ('Army in Britain'), with 'Helena,' Constantine's mother and daughter of 'Coel of Colchester' (apocryphal), and Constantine's father, the 'Augustus [emperor] of the Western Empire.'[631] Next they encounter 'Fausta,' identified as Constantine's wife to be, and the story moves to Gaul ('soldiers of the Army in Gaul'), where Constantine begins to build alliances after the death of his

[628] Ibsen: 2011, 158; see also Part Three, Scene Three, which covers Julian's reluctant persecution of Christians who, rather than accepting his programme of reconstructing pagan shrines, fight back.
[629] Ibid., 94.
[630] Ibid., 148 and 158; the former quotation is drawn from a dream Julian relates, where he sees Christ continuing to triumph even on different planets by "suffering, dying, and conquering again and again."
[631] Sayers: 1952, 9-10; all subsequent references to the character list are from these pages.

father. The list hints at Constantine's victory outside Rome ('Prefect of the City of Rome'), and subsequent alliance with 'Licinius, Augustus of the Eastern Empire.' Following that, there is 'Arius, a heresiarch,' and a plethora of 'Bishops,' which highlights Constantine's contribution to Church history, notably in the form of the universal Council of Nicaea and its decision to adopt 'Catholic' Christianity, a pivotal event that the preface also draws attention to. Finally, the list presents Constantine's son, Crispus, at age 12, then at age 19. Read in isolation, these ages might not carry much weight, but read in tandem with the preface, where Sayers tells of how Constantine's "most splendid fortune is darkened by the slaying of his wife and his brilliant young son and heir" the names and ages become charged with tragic foreshadowing.[632] "Madness, murder, an act of justice? No explanation ... appears wholly satisfactory" writes Sayers, leaving the reader wondering how she will interpret the event.[633] Time passes, as noted by the age of Constantine's other children, and the list ends with 'Attendants' who preside over Constantine's funeral. The list thus fulfils the promise of the title, and presents a life of the Emperor Constantine, told through his associates.

These lists affirm that history is about the deeds of characters. Specifically, history is to do with the actions of famous historical figures.[634] As the Greek historian Polybius wrote, history must include "the driving forces and the dominant preoccupations of the various peoples concerned, both in their public and their private life."[635] *Emperor and Galilean* presents the reader with Julian's clandestine conversion from Christianity to paganism. "What washes away the water of my baptism?" asks Julian to his confident, Maximus; to which Maximus replies: "the blood of the sacrifice."[636] This is then writ large in Julian's ambition to convince Christians to embrace paganism. Correspondingly, in *The Emperor Constantine*, the reader sees Constantine at his most vulnerable, condemned for executing his son, Crispus, which becomes the impetus for the emperor's embrace of the Christian faith and Helena's discovery of the True Cross. The dominant preoccupation here is Christianity, presented as a force that affects individuals, and also an historical one used to understand change. For Polybius, representing the lives of historical figures within the wider context of 'universal' history allowed contemporary readers, as well as future generations, to pass judgement on the aims of those who spearheaded the rise of Rome.[637] Character lists in historical plays set up equivalent reading strategies by distilling what happened in the past into a drama about

[632] Sayers: 1952, 6.
[633] Ibid., 8; the play likens Constantine to Theseus in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, who, "in his rage, not waiting to hear the truth [about the incestuous claims made by his wife against his son], sent Hippolytus to his death [173]." This time, however, there is forgiveness to be found in the True Cross, which Helena sets out to find following Crispus' death: "the World is ready to creep to the foot of the Cross and be healed of its pain [183]."
[634] See Dewald: 1998, xvii, who credits Herodotus with aligning human interest and historical importance.
[635] Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 3.4.
[636] Ibsen: 2011, 99.
[637] Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 3.4.

the lives of historical figures. They represent the tension between the often singular focus of the title (*The Philosopher Prince*, *Constantine*, *Priestess of Avalon*), and the large cast required to tell the tale, as well as the tensions within individuals and between groups. Character lists certify the genre's resistance to "univocal representations," its interest in "multiple perspectives," whether in the form of religious differences, or through the voices of slaves, soldiers, and gladiators.[638] A large array of characters appears necessary to imaginatively reconstruct a period, while the way characters are ordered establishes a timeline punctuated by the appearance and disappearance of key figures on the stage (both theatrical and historical) of late antiquity. Even if the primary purpose of character lists is to catalogue names, they advertise *character* as a vehicle for understanding the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of those who lived in the past. These lists therefore splice the 'universal' history of Polybius and the biographical tradition of Plutarch we saw at the start of this chapter with more recent ideas of 'empathic' history espoused by R. G. Collingwood in the twentieth century. Collingwood suggested that to understand the past, the historian has to place themselves in "the situation in which Caesar stood, and think ... what Caesar thought about the situation."[639] This "re-enactment of past thought" is externalised by character lists, and presented to the reader as a critical and authoritative reconstruction of the history of Christian/pagan thought.[640]

Unlike plays, novels do not need to index their characters or itemise their speakers. Historical novels that make use of character lists therefore do so for a reason. By providing a detailed list of historical figures and the importance of each, novels draw attention to their dramatic setup, the creation of a stage for the retelling of conflicts that continue to entertain.[641] In *Murder Imperial*, the 'Principal Characters' are demarcated according to rank. There is a list of 'Emperors,' 'Imperial Officials,' 'The Christian Church,' then 'Courtesans,' and 'Actors.'[642] These headings support the title, blurb, and author summary by outlining the theme of the novel, namely a murder mystery set in ancient Rome before Constantine's victory over Licinius in the East. Three of Constantine's courtesans have been murdered and marked with the Cross in a mockery of the emperor's famous vision, and the novel sets out to establish who was responsible through the imperial spies under the command of the empress Helena. The resulting effect is to uproot historical figures and replant them at the centre of a conspiracy that takes the form of a *whodunit*, with the reader provided with clues to make their own deductions via the character list. Over the course of the novel, it becomes clear

[638] Mitchell and Parsons: 2013, 6; this is in contrast to Aristotle's distinction in the *Poetics* (1448b20 - 1449a5) between tragedy, which deals only with the actions of the 'illustrious', and comedy, which represents the 'inferior' – even the two plays above, which are certainly tragedies, break away from this mould.
[639] Collingwood: 1996, especially 215; see also Munslow: 1997, 195.
[640] Ibid., 215-216.
[641] Stevens: 2013, 27, see also Groot: 2016, 25, who is one of the few to consider the paratexts of historical fiction; unfortunately, he does not separate character lists from family trees, missing important distinctions.
[642] Doherty: 2003, vii-viii.

that a lone assassin and Licinius are to blame, and so the character list may also function to disorientate the reader, throwing them off scent.

In all the examples given so far, historical figures rub shoulders with characters of unknown provenance, a trend in the staging of history that stretches as far back as Aeschylus' *The Persians*.[643] Let us now consider how other novelists try to divide their historical and fictional characters, what ideas of history this engages with, and how successful their attempts have been.

The Dragon Waiting and *Priestess of Avalon* exhibit a more concerted effort to distinguish between historical figures and invented characters. In the former, the character list appears at the end in a chapter entitled 'Shadows as They Pass.' It may seem unusual for Ford to include such a list in what is otherwise an alternative reimagining of the Wars of the Roses, where Christianity never took hold, the Byzantine Empire survived, and vampires roam across Italy. But it is common in alternative histories, which rely on the established nature of history in order to subvert it.[644] Ford opens the chapter with a short paragraph introducing the "real historical figures" of the story, omitting any fictional characters encountered in the previous pages.[645] In doing so, Ford signals the work as a historical novel (despite its premise) thanks to long-held assumptions that a historical novel is made up of "combinations of invented characters and historical figures."[646] The binary division between historical and invented characters suggests everything is in order. However, the introduction also notes that "some liberties have been taken [with these figures]," a paradoxical claim that seems to invalidate the list's historical status, except when we consider that the same prerogative has been claimed by authors of historical lives since the time of Plutarch.[647] Condensed events or deft management of the record do not have to undermine the historical nature of the project (depending on your definition of 'historical'), at least in so far as making whatever past is being represented simpler, or to bring out certain themes. Lukács famously claimed that Scott, through a "'world-historical individual'," showed the reader the "development in the whole society of the time."[648] This composite hero, Lukács alleged, both humanises the past, and is "representative of an important and significant movement embracing large sections of the people."[649] Lukács defended the use of fiction to create a more historically identifying character. Similarly, rather than apologising for introducing fictional characters (as Sayers does in her preface), or for fictionalising

[643] In *The Persians*, we meet the historical ruler of Persia, Xerxes, following his defeat at the Battle of Salamis, as well as the ghost of his father, Darius, an unnamed messenger, and the chorus of Persian Elders.
[644] For more on this, see Phillips: 2013, 221-224.
[645] Ford: 1983, 373.
[646] Coletta: 1996, 5; see also Fleishman: 1971, 3.
[647] Ford: 1983, 373; see also Pelling: 2002, 143-170.
[648] Lukács: 1989, 127.
[649] Ibid., 38, and especially 33-53; see also Eco: 1980, 574.

historical figures, Ford instead offers a helpful reflection on deviation.[650] Specifically, Ford takes the reader through his depiction of the Emperor Julian, explaining why he departed from the record to have Julian survive, wipe out Christianity, and be remembered as 'Julian the Wise'.[651] Amidst the implausibility of Ford's tale, readers are assuranced of the novel's fidelity to the past ("a better man than Julian might have reestablished paganism. And so I have made him") that betray its complex framings. Ford creates a composite Julian, whose presence in the story requires the reader to make sense of a past that did not happen through reference to one that did.

Priestess of Avalon offers a similar approach. Bradley and Paxson's novel tells of the life of the empress Helena (Constantine's mother) reimagined as a priestess of Avalon, gifted with magical powers. The character list in this novel provides each character with a short blurb: 'Constantine (Flavius Valerius Constantinus) – son of Helena, Emperor, 306 – 337,' while their historical existence is identified by the presence of an asterisk. On one hand, this appears to enable readers to switch between a historical/fictional reading of the characters in the novel, with the characters themselves establishing the bounds of each. History, it is implied, will be made evident by the interaction between certified and invented characters – both are necessary, these lists claim, to reconstruct and elucidate history. On the other hand, the use of asterisks problematises a binary historical/fictional reading, and reveals instead that the reader primarily imagines the past through composite characters. Helena, for example, is marked by an asterisk (as she should be), except the novel reinvents her entire tradition. As the preface claims, this is "the story of a legend."[652]

Another way of thinking about the discontinuities these lists produce is to connect them to author summaries, to think of them not only as lists that parade the author's research and knowledge (Bradley supplies Constantine's full Latin name), but also as paratexts that set up where the fiction gets things *right*, avoiding error by promoting reader interest in real figures. This honesty in separating the invented from the historical represents a thoroughly traditional approach to historical writing. In *How to Write History*, Lucian reflected on those histories seasoned "unreasonably with fictions" as "a truly shameful sight;" the historian should write for the reader who will only accept "what is genuine."[653] Lucian believed that history's use lay in revealing the truth, which he further emphasised in his satire, *A True History*, where he attacked those historians who dissemble in plain view by stating that his tale is a lie. "In admitting that I am lying," he claimed to be more honest.[654] Ford's admission that he has taken liberties with his characters, and Bradley's (mis)use of asterisks, engages with complex ideas of truth as understood in the discourses of history

[650] For more on authors apologising for introducing fictional characters, see Genette: 1997, 211.
[651] Ford: 1983, 368.
[652] Bradley and Paxson: 2011, vi.
[653] Lucian, *How to Write History*, 10-11.
[654] Ibid. 9 and Lucian, *A True History*, 4.

and fiction. In attempting to claim the truthfulness of history (by isolating the fictional), they also claim the truth of fiction through their honesty in altering the record.

Family trees present another type of character list, made famous in fictional retellings of Roman history by their appearance in Robert Graves' *Claudius* novels.[655] They feature in Slaughter's fictional biography of the Emperor Constantine and Waters' recent tale of two fictional male lovers who tie their fates to the rising star of the Emperor Julian. Family trees dictate a genealogical approach to history, though in our examples below, this is also tied to an account of dynasties, statecraft, and the actions of rulers and nations – an essential pairing in history since its beginnings, when Herodotus charted the Achaemenid dynasty in *The Histories*. This fits well with Slaughter's *Constantine: The Miracle of the Flaming Cross*, which is interested in how Constantine established his power and how his "acceptance and then devoted use of Christianity" helped him to "consolidate his Empire."[656] The reader is told that Slaughter's family tree, entitled 'The House of Constantine,' is a direct reproduction of the one found in George Rawlinson's *A Manual of Ancient History*, published in 1869. The use of this antique artefact attempts to authenticate Slaughter's 'biography' of Constantine, and prefigures the somewhat dry and distant narrative voice. Whether intentional or not, the tree is a relic of the 'Great Man' theory of history, extremely popular in the nineteenth century. In 1840, Thomas Carlyle wrote that "the History of the world is but the Biography of great men."[657] We can see the effects of this in the way the tree presents Constantine's name in capital letters, and includes his epithet 'The Great' without quotation marks. Slaughter's use of this family tree, a century later, along with his list of emperors on the previous page, signals a preoccupation with a certain type of old-fashioned biographical history legitimised by dated paratexts lifted from enormous and sweeping historical surveys. In attempting to "assert historiographical accuracy and to eliminate fictionality," Slaughter works hard to re-present Constantine and his legacy to the mid-twentieth century American faithful.[658] Constantine's historical existence and reception (as The Great) is used by Slaughter to extol the virtues of accepting Christ, to find "peace", as Constantine does, through baptism.[659] The borrowed tree establishes Constantine as an ideal, real-life precedent, which fits the objective of the novel's series, entitled *The Pathway of Faith*.

The family tree in Waters' *The Philosopher Prince* is similarly interested in dynasty, but much less interested in 'great men'. Waters highlights the emperors of his 'House of Constantine' in bold, letting the reader know this tale is about dynastic politics, particularly between the two schisms of the House, one which led to a series of Christian emperors, and the other to the pagan emperor

[655] For more on their role in these novels, see Bennett: 2015, 30-31.
[656] Slaughter: 1965, blurb.
[657] Carlyle: 1852, 'The Hero as Divinity'.
[658] Bennett: 2015, 31.
[659] Slaughter: 1965, 425.

Julian, the eponymous 'philosopher prince'. Part of the story revolves around the tyranny of the Christian emperor Constantius and Julian's inability to "look on at injustice and do nothing."[660] The other half concerns itself with the queer relationship between the main fictional protagonists. The latter takes centre stage more often than Julian, whose battles mostly happen 'off-screen'. What the family tree achieves in narrative terms, then, is to "prevent any tendency on the part of the reader to ... dehistoricize."[661] The novel's queering of the record through the protagonists' forbidden love is therefore wedded to a narrative of the fourth century by the family tree.

Family trees bring together the two types of framing activities explored above. They indicate, as well as break down, the emplotment of a novel's historical contents according to dynastic politics and autocratic rulership, and point towards their ramifications. Storm, when talking about drama, argued that "the *dramatis personae* are latently the story itself. They are the persons of the drama, the agents in the action, the figures that compel care and attention, those who deliver all of a story's interactions, conflicts, and experiences."[662] These paratexts describe the type of history to come in a way that is there on the page, but also not there, at least not yet. At the same time, they reveal those characters that possess prior historical existence, something that might otherwise remain unrealised. Like character lists, they promise a "reconsideration of the hidden lives" of historical figures by identifying their historicity.[663] I began this section with an epigraph from Manzoni. His powerful and persuasive suggestion that readers should, in advance of the story, be able to "discern what was preserved ... of the real facts" of history created a new paradigm for the genre, one that anticipated a certain type of reader and reading. By including various forms of *dramatis personae*, novels and plays provide an 'objective' view of the mechanisms that make up a historical reconstruction, suggesting a division exists between the real and the unreal. While this exists to reassure readers of what is what, it also draws attention to the (non)existence of characters, conceding the composite nature of the historical figures and events that populate the imagination, as well as the balancing act readers are required to do throughout.

Tables of contents have been around for a while. Pliny the Elder made use of one in the preface to his *Natural History*; he also noted that his was not the first, but that Valerius Soranus, a Latin poet writing in the early first century BCE, had featured one in *On Mysteries*.[664] Since their beginning, tables of contents have been used to break down complex works spanning numerous scrolls/pages,

[660] Waters: 2011, 158.
[661] Hutcheon: 1989, 86.
[662] Storm: 2016, 16.
[663] Groot: 2010, 165.
[664] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, *Book 1*, *Preface*; see also Henderson: 2002, 274-276 for a discussion of how Pliny the Younger, in compiling his letters/preface, followed the Elder Pliny's organisational style.

to summarise their contents, and, in Pliny's case, to serve as a location to document the sources he drew on. Pliny defined the purpose of the table of contents as a supportive device for the reader: "any one may search for what he wishes, and may know where to find it."[665] This presentation style became the norm for lengthy works of history. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* is an exemplary case; his table of contents not only breaks down the exhaustive text into manageable chapters, but provides a summary of each.[666] In the following century, an early proponent of the historical novel, Victor Hugo, supplemented *Les Misérables* with a comprehensive contents page in the style of Gibbon and Pliny. Not content with the practical functions of the contents page, however, Hugo imbued each entry with poetic style.[667] Modern contents continue this tradition, with their list of chapter titles acting as a thematic survey of the work's content.[668] I wish to look at four examples, two that contain chapter lists, and two that accommodate alternative lists of dates and place names.

The table of contents in Waugh's *Helena* and de Wohl's *The Living Wood: Saint Helena and the Emperor Constantine* provide a useful case study. Waugh's 'Contents' includes twelve chapters, and a brief examination reveals a strong Christian thread (8. 'Constantine's Great Treat,' 10. 'The Innocence of Bishop Macarius,' 11. 'Epiphany'). A more thorough investigation reveals Classical parallels. Chapter 2, titled 'Fair Helen Forfeit,' is a direct quotation from the *Iliad*, made apparent from Chapter 1 where the young Helena is read the passage about her namesake.[669] The meaning of this title develops over the course of a reading; Helena's life is forfeit first to Constantius, her husband, then to Constantine, her son, until the novel reverses the concept through Helena's discovery of the True Cross, which is her gift to the world. The Cross becomes Helena's "blunt assertion" wherein "lies Hope," an ending that is neatly foreshadowed by the final title (12. 'Ellen's Invention').[670] These types of contents, according to Genette, remind the reader of the "titular apparatus" of the novel.[671] In Waugh's case, the thematic chapter titles are "demonstrative," much like the title of the novel: this work is *about* Helena, a carefully plotted narrative of her life and discovery, as retold by a writer known for his wit.[672] More importantly, the contents page provides a parallel, reduced, but intertextually rich narrative that allows for playful intratextual allusion. *Helena* is a short novel, making a contents page functionally redundant. Instead, it becomes a poetic space,

[665] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, *Book 1*, *Preface*.
[666] See Gibbon: 1998, xxiii-xxxiv.
[667] See Genette: 1997, 308 on the 418 chapter titles that appear in Hugo's contents list, which Genette argues may make the text itself seem "shallow" in comparison.
[668] Ibid., 317.
[669] See also Stopp: 1997, who writes about this chapter title and its relationship to Helena in the novel.
[670] Waugh: 1984, 159; the Invention is a reference to the discovery of the Cross (invention in the archaic sense of a discovery), while "Ellen" refers to a tale Waugh tells in the preface of a woman who mistakes Helena for someone called 'Ellen' who made up (invented) the story of the Cross.
[671] Genette: 1997, 317-318.
[672] Ibid., 315.

a self-conscious, reconstructed catalogue of (ironic) references to history and literature. In the same way that Pliny's contents referred outwards, seeming to encompass the natural world ('on Insects,' 'on Gold and Silver,' on 'Medicines made from Wild Plants'), Waugh's discursive titles refer extratextually – to historical events, Biblical tales, and Classical literature – thus enabling them to be read not just as a 'Contents' for the novel, but also a list of the concepts Waugh drew from the contents of history.[673] If character lists prefigure the importance of character in reimaginings of the past, Waugh's 'Contents' announces that his past, along with a reader's encounter of that past, is mediated by an amalgamation of popular conceptions of history (3. 'None but My Foe to be My Guide' refers to the ballad 'Helen of Kirkconnel' published by Scott) and unbounded intertextual references. We will encounter one of these (6. 'Ancien Régime') again later in this chapter.

Waugh's chapter list is but one form of 'contents'. It is worth considering how others differ. de Wohl's *The Living Wood*, a Christian novel that also presents Helena's discovery of the True Cross as an historical event, is divided into 'books' accompanied by dates. The 'Contents' page gathers these 'books' together, along with their relevant page numbers. Thus there is 'Book One: A.D. 272,' 'Book Two: A.D. 274-289,' and so on. Unlike the chapter titles in Waugh, this style of Contents plays down the literary frame of the novel in favour of a closer alliance with classical historiography, ideas of causation, and modern periodisation.[674] The earliest histories, including Thucydides' *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, were edited – most likely by librarians at Alexandria or Pergamum – into 'books', while later writers who had grown accustomed to this format, such as Polybius, found it useful to categorise their histories in a similar fashion.[675] Modern editions of Thucydides and Polybius are still presented as a collection of 'books', meaning that de Wohl's Contents page evokes a familiar organisational principle of writing pertaining to the ancient world. In contrast, the use of dates, particularly 'A.D.', may appear anachronistic. Yet the *choice* of dates is telling. 'Book Five: A.D. 312,' for example, references the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, which cemented Constantine's power over the West, while 'Book Six: A.D. 326' refers not only to the year in which Constantine executed his son and wife, but also the year that Helena supposedly found the True Cross. de Wohl further emphasises the historicity of his tale by noting, at the end, that all the dates are accurate.[676] Each 'Book' encourages the reader to treat the story retrospectively, while the dates encompass or even *contain* Constantine's victory at the Milvian Bridge, the murder of his son and wife, and Helena's discovery, both in terms of how they appear in the narrative, and also in terms of the way history is

[673] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, *Book 1*, *Preface*.
[674] For more on how this trope became part of Herodotus' *Histories* (and of later historical works), see Dewald: 1998, xxi; Genette: 1997, 308 argues how the contents of Hugo's *Les Misérables* proclaim it a novel.
[675] For a recent discussion of the division of Thucydides' work, along with that of other ancient authors, see Higbie: 2010, esp. 16-24; see also Bonner: 1920, 73; and Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 3.1, where he discusses the organisation of his work and the topics covered into 'books'.
[676] Wohl: 2008, 369.

written and understood according to dates.[677] The novel presents an ultimately knowable state of affairs based, according to de Wohl, on "historical fact" and "accredited history" that transcends interpretation or uncertainty.[678] And even where uncertainty does exist (Helena's birthplace), de Wohl brushes this off, saying where historians disagree, he could choose the best version.

Another detailed chronology can be found in Baxter's *Emperor*, accompanied by a conversion chart of Roman measurements and a list of Latin place names complete with English translations, a framing device the novel shares with Bradley's *Priestess of Avalon*. These lists, while they do not bear the title 'contents', function in much the same way in terms of their statement of intent. Both novels are alternative histories, with Baxter focusing on turning points (a failed fictional assassination of Constantine), while Bradley merges the fantastic (Helena as a British priestess) with a feminist rewriting of the early fourth century CE. And yet both novels are still fundamentally interested in an "ethical engagement" with historical accuracy and truth, with the need to show their 'workings' when it comes to translating history.[679] As Lucian said, readers can put up with issues of style, "but when it comes to getting localities wrong, not just by parasangs but even by whole days' journeys, can you see any distinguished model for that?"[680] These 'contents' not only restate the author-as-researcher model we encountered in author summaries, they also convey a particular style of historical reconstruction, one where readers are perfectly happy to engage with alternative history, fantasy, and a past where ancient Greeks and Romans speak English, providing that past is authenticated by means of basic yet defined factual information that identifies the historical distance separating then from now. Such lists also permit the author to investigate the geographical and temporal gaps that open up between consecutive dates and place names, thus showing that, while lists of such things can accurately refer to some aspect of antiquity, it is what lies behind/between what is known that really matters.[681] This, contents pages seem to say, can be found in the story. It is worth closing our discussion of contents pages by referring back to what they are: paratexts. Jansen makes clear that something in *para* is not just "'beside' or 'next to' something," but also "'part of' that something else."[682] Waugh's chapter titles, de Wohl's dated 'books', and Baxter and Bradley's list of Latinised place names may appear alongside the story, but they are also integral to its framing activities. Anne Freadman defined tables of contents as "notational frames for the ceremonies of reading."[683] Contents pages form an important part of this

[677] Wohl: 2008, 368; see also Genette: 1997, 315 on non-thematic titles.
[678] Ibid., 368-369.
[679] Groot: 2016, 41-42; see also Grant: 1996, 26-27 who offers the reader similar 'workings' behind his translation of Tacitus' *Annals*, as well as references to genealogies.
[680] Lucian, *How to Write History*, 24-25.
[681] Maxwell: 2009, 19.
[682] Jansen: 2014, 5.
[683] Freadman quoted in MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 92.

ceremony, one that looks forwards and backwards. As well as ordering a novel's "version of the past" by framing its historical contents, authors have remodelled this functional device to create a factual framework using fictional interstices for their reconstruction of the past.[684]

We now (re)turn to epigraphs. These paratextual devices are usually encountered at the start of novels or chapters and most often appear as a quotation from another work. Genette traced the history of epigraphs in literature, arguing they emerged in the seventeenth century, while admitting that authorial mottos might have preceded them.[685] I will not repeat Genette's summary, except to clarify that epigraphs have a much longer history than Genette suggests. When introducing the *Confessions*, Augustine opens with a Biblical quotation: "You are great, Lord, and highly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is immeasurable."[686] Likewise, in Book VI he integrates a range of Biblical passages in a prefatory lamentation on the loss of youthful hope.[687] While these are not as clearly separated from the text as modern epigraphs, they constitute a Christianising framework of interpretation for what follows. Second, although our understanding of 'epigraphs' stems from their use in books, the term itself carries over from *epigraphy*, which identifies inscriptions found on ancient material culture.[688] Since books have become a significant part of material culture, the desire to inscribe them with the words of others, to engage in a culture of quotation, requires similar investigation in terms of the habits that lie behind inscribing books, and what effects epigraphs have in terms of erecting frameworks of interpretation.

The use of ancient inscriptions for "asserting one's status," was often adopted by societies subsumed into the Roman Empire, especially by the lower-ranking members of those societies.[689] Epigraphs appear frequently in historical novels published in the last few decades by lesser known authors and/or those considered to be writing genre – as opposed to literary – fiction. Five of the novels in my case study reflect this trend. The mobilisation of the epigraph in contemporary historical fiction signals a desire on the author's part to be part of a literary collective initiated by the founders of the genre. At the same time, it demonstrates the author's desire for their work to be read within the wider framework of Classical thought. Waters, who frames *The Philosopher Prince* with two epigraphs, one from Robert Browning and the other from Leo Strauss, uses these to establish his credentials as a serious author well versed in literature. For genre writers like Doherty, meanwhile, epigraphs attributed to Virgil ("From one crime we learn the nature of them all"), Cicero

[684] Groot: 2016, 42.
[685] See Genette: 1997, 144-149.
[686] Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1.
[687] Ibid., 6.1.
[688] See Bodel: 2001, 1-56.
[689] Ibid., 6-10.

("Who stands to gain?"), and Juvenal ("Who will guard the guards themselves?") suggest this is not *just* a murder mystery, but a work concerned with the (ancient) legacy of crime.[690] Citing the epigraphic author and work is as important as the content of the epigraph; the historical novelist appears to be engaging in dialogue with their sources, while also demonstrating good academic practice, particularly when it comes to making claims about how things once were.[691] Waters and Doherty establish a relationship between their work and its sources, situating their novels within a "cultural tradition."[692] Genette argued that novelists who follow this pattern appear to dedicate their novel to their sources, choosing, in the process, their "peers" and "place in the pantheon."[693] What Genette was less clear about was what that might mean for readers. As I will show, epigraphs signify a novel's adherence to a certain type of historical representation and truth.

The epigraphs from Browning and Strauss in Waters' *The Philosopher Prince* suggest that history is made clear by the ideas of philosophers and poets, while at the same time demonstrating the author's wide-ranging cultural knowledge. They further propose that the work will be a poetic and philosophical inquiry into Julian's reign (Browning was famously inspired by the Classics, while Strauss made his name through reinterpreting classical philosophy in an attempt to present universal truths). The epigraph attributed to Browning is as follows: "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, Or what's a heaven for?" This is combined with an excerpt from Strauss' work on Xenophon and tyranny: "There will always be men who will revolt against a state which is destructive of humanity or in which there is no longer a possibility of noble action and of great deeds." The strength of these epigraphs lies in their universalising gesture, a feature that implies *this is how people are* and *these are the greater forces at work*. Human tendency is situated as a means to explore history and identity, and especially the workings of ancient rulership. The title, in this case, "modifies the meaning of the epigraph" by situating *The Philosopher Prince* as the man Browning and Strauss refers to, thus prefiguring a reading of Julian.[694] What we have is an acknowledgment of the sources used to interpret the past (given to the reader as keys for interpreting the novel), a clear advertisement for the multiple authorities supporting the novel's historical account, as well as statements of purpose regarding its attempt to map onto the past a broad hypothesis regarding humanity's relationship to power and authority.

This is not a religious history (despite the religiously charged nature of Julian's reign), but the history of a reluctant ruler forced on the path to power by the emperor Constantius, who, on his

[690] Doherty: 2003, 1, 173, and 277.
[691] See Hamnett: 2011, 99 on the historical novel and its preoccupation with sources.
[692] Genette: 1997, 160.
[693] Ibid., 147-148 and 159-160.
[694] Ibid., 157; Waters' *The Philosopher Prince* also fits Genette's model where "The use of the epigraph as a justificatory appendage of the title is almost a must when the title itself consists of a borrowing."

deathbed, is lambasted by Julian's friend, the fictional protagonist Drusus: "No one is born with the title to rule: he acquires it ... But you have allowed yourself to be misled by sycophants and flatterers, and you have become not a prince but a tyrant."[695] Julian is present only as an exemplar in this final scene, when Constantius admits "Perhaps, after all, as the philosophers say, it is such men who should rule, who care nothing for power."[696] Julian is the one who believes in "the idea of Rome," and sets out to create a better society. Because the novel ends before Julian's disastrous Persian campaign, it succeeds in presenting the reader with this history.[697] I noted above that Waters' novel is concerned with the idea of tyranny, but also with the lives of its queer protagonists, Drusus and Marcellus. The blurb informs the reader that these are "two young friends of the British nobility" who have "fallen foul of the emperor's authority." Their sole ally, the reader is told, is "the young imperial prince, Julian."[698] Waters characterises his Julian as a man open to the hidden desires of others; Julian, who himself hides his love of paganism, implicitly accommodates Drusus and Marcellus, accepting their love. In this way, Waters bridges the political concerns of his narrative. If we return to the epigraphs: on one hand, they direct a reading of Constantius and Julian; on the other, they can be seen as an apology for Waters' queering of the historical record, perhaps even for queerness itself.[699] The "revolt against a state which is destructive of humanity" is as much about the late Roman state (and states generally) as it is about the oppression exerted by states against their own citizens, including the impact mainstream history has had on queer history. Equally, Browning's epigraph highlights Waters' efforts to recover queer history, while also alluding to Julian's potential utopia, which in this case is not just a pagan utopia, but potentially a queer one, too.

The epigraphs in Waters' novel can also be read as an analogy for the skill of the historical novelist, who grasps for the impossible (the past) in order to shed light on contemporary tyrannies (over both people and identity) and provide a solution through the ideal of the philosopher prince. The positioning of the epigraphs allows these devices to function as motto for both the story, and for how to read the past.[700] To break this down, let us turn to Mahlknecht's theory of epigraphs as mottos in film. The epigraphs in Waters' novel, much like those used in film, become mottos through the way they summarise the work's "major theme[s]" and "infuse" it with "deeper meaning," thus encouraging readers to reflect on its "wider applications."[701] In this case, that means oppression against minorities by the state, and by state-sanctioned religion, across history. Epigraphs as mottos also set the work's pitch, including what ideas the novel is tuned to and how intensely they come

[695] Waters: 2011, 367-368.
[696] Ibid., 369.
[697] Ibid., 328.
[698] See Ibid., rear cover.
[699] See Matzner: 2016, especially 191.
[700] Mahlknecht: 2011, 78 and 88-9.
[701] Ibid., 78-82 and Love: 2010, 491-492.

across. Finally, epigraphs reduce the complexity of the story to something symbolic, like a leitmotif for a character or idea in film.[702] This symbol is first 'heard' outside the story, but encountered again within. Each rendition helps to reemphasise the fidelity of the story to the ideas of history evoked by Browning and Strauss, as well as the contemporary applicability of Julian's example and the moralising tone vis-à-vis tyrannies.

The last point I wish to make about epigraphs is their capacity to negotiate a space where "meanings within and without" the work meet, and how the possibility of contagion between these allows historical novels with epigraphs to claim continuity with the world of ancient philosophers, playwrights, and theorists.[703] To explore this, let us take a look at the epigraphs in *Gods and Legions*, which tell a vastly different story of the Emperor Julian. Ford opens with a quotation, ostensibly from Euripides (though wrongly attributed): "Those whom the gods would destroy they first drive mad," which provides an advanced reading of the plot, a "prospective" glimpse of Julian's mental state, especially as it will be seen through the eyes of the Christian narrator and physician, who ultimately murders Julian for his pagan beliefs.[704] The motto relates to the work's "thematic and ... narrative aspect," since it foreshadows what readers will see (Julian's madness), as well as how this will be narrated (inevitable downfall).[705] Despite the incorrect attribution, the use of Euripides' name signals that the events of the novel will take place on a tragic stage, indeed, that it will be about *Gods and Legions*.[706] More, it invokes "the transcendent word that encloses the narrative action," which here pertains to the broader setting of antiquity as glimpsed through the aphorism of a famous playwright.[707] This world is further enriched by epigraphs from Marcus Aurelius and Vegetius. The philosophy of the former, "beware that thou not be made a Caesar, that thou not be dyed with such dye," becomes representative of Julian's anxiety in the novel regarding his imperial heritage. The statement foreshadows the danger Julian will face once Constantius makes him Caesar, and is a powerful intertextual allusion to Julian's first words in Ammianus' history ("wrapped in death's purple by all-powerful fate"), itself a quotation from Homer's *Iliad*.[708] These classical models are used to highlight Julian's belief that Constantius has condemned him to death, a view that Ford has his Julian echo.[709] The epigraph from Vegetius ("in war, valor is more useful than strength of arms, but even greater than valor is timing"), provides an ancient ratification of the fortuitous timing of

[702] Mahlknecht: 2011, 78-82; see also Genette: 1997, 160 on how epigraphs mark the 'tenor' of the work.
[703] See Love: 2010, 291-292 and Mahlknecht: 2011, 81.
[704] Ford: 2002, xi and Genette: 1997, 149.
[705] Mahlknecht: 2011, 78.
[706] A similar effect is created by the other Ford in *The Dragon Waiting*, which opens with a quotation from Shakespeare's *Richard III* to frame an alternative history on the same historical figure – this also has the additional effect of highlighting (and engaging with) the chain of receptions around Richard III.
[707] David Bordwell quoted in Mahlknecht: 2011, 78.
[708] See Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*, 15.8 and Homer, *The Illiad*, 5.83.
[709] Ford: 2002, 58; for more on this important phrase in Ammianus' history, see Ross: 2016, 201.

Julian's civil war against Constantius, in which Constantius dies before they meet on the battlefield, leaving Julian as sole emperor.[710] These epigraphs appeal to the extratextual authority of classical authors and their tried-and-tested precepts to heighten the significance of each 'book', while also justifying new adaptations of the Roman past. Epigraphs in historical fiction translate the story into the historical continuum. This may be a flattened continuum, where the names and sayings of well-known authors are collected to signify 'Classical thought', but it exerts a powerful legitimating force, allowing the reader to interpret Ford's reconstructed past through those who lived it.[711]

History speaks of people dissimilar to us, and attempts to make them comprehensible. The paratexts explored in this section demonstrate how novelists are acutely aware of this requirement, and, whether they list characters, codify the breadth and depth of the past through contents lists, or inscribe how (and through who) readers should conceive the past, they tack closely to the authorising gestures of certain modes of history and ways of representing its content.

[710] Ford: 2002, 3 and 275.
[711] See Hamnett: 2011, 16 on realism in historical novels, and Groot: 2016, 25 on paratexts and interpretation.

§6 Forewords and Prefaces

"Borges wrote that the preface is the place in his [sic] work where the author is 'least the author.' That must be understood, perhaps, as least the *creator*, but conversely, most the *communicator*."[712]
– Gerard Genette

A Preface to Prefaces

"God spare thee, reader, long prefaces."[713]
– Jorge Luis Borges

The preface constitutes the most overt appeal from the author to the reader regarding how to read the story. If titles, along with cover art, biographies, maps, contents pages, character lists, and epigraphs can be considered to form an 'outer' frame, over which the author has a variable degree of control, then the preface forms the 'innermost' frame, where the author's presence is most strongly felt. In concluding where the story begins, the preface retains close ties with the events about to unfold. The preface's physical proximity to the story enhances its introspective qualities, especially regarding the story's historical contents, its framings and construction, and the author's apparent position on the relationship between history and fiction.

The contiguity of the preface with both the story and authorial intention has caused it to outshine all other paratexts.[714] In terms of the historical novel, critics have claimed the preface highlights the metafictional potential of the genre, directing the reader to the historical novel's "status as an artefact" in order to trigger reflections on the nature of history and fiction.[715] I believe, however, that Werner Wolf's term 'metareference' has greater applicability for thinking through the role of self-reflexive prefaces in works of historical fiction, where attempts to draw attention to the fictionality of the historical reconstruction within the story are strictly limited. Metareference encompasses all "references to, or comments on, aspects of a medial artefact, a medium or the media in general that issue from a logically higher 'meta-level' within a given artefact and elicits corresponding self-referential reflections in the recipient."[716]

Self-reflexive prefaces have been a part of historical novels since the eighteenth century. In part a response to criticisms of the emerging genre that claimed it might mislead, prefaces offered authors the chance "to teach readers how to read their novels."[717] Whether by "disavowing factuality and stressing the moral dimensions or the fictionality of their creations; disavowing

[712] Genette: 1997, 261.
[713] Borges: 1973, xiii.
[714] Roughly a third of Genette's *Paratexts* is devoted to prefaces.
[715] Waugh: 2002, 2; see also Genette: 1997, 163-164, 171 and 282-283; for further discussions of metafictionality in historical fiction, see Groot: 2010, 9, 117-119, and 184; see also Hutcheon: 1989, who called postmodern historical fiction 'historiographic metafiction'.
[716] Wolf: 2009, v.
[717] Stevens: 2013, 23.

fictionality and placing the stress on the didactic elements of their works" or "pointing out the fictionality inherent in historical works," historical novelists attempted to harness and synthesise the authority given to them by their chosen discourses of history and fiction.[718] We see this most clearly in Walter Scott's prefaces, where he established his authority, summarised and aggrandised his chosen topics, professed the need for imagination in historical reconstruction, and pioneered a self-awareness regarding the modus operandi of historical fiction.[719] The continued use of prefaces in historical fiction has become a mark of the genre's intellectual rigor, a "source of particular in-group pleasure" for readers who have grown used to authors disclosing the theoretical premises behind producing historical fiction ahead of a realist story set in the past.[720] The prefaces of historical novels encourage the reader to think self-referentially about their place in history, as well as their experience of – and participation in – authenticated reconstructions of history. At the same time, prefaces look forward to the narrative, offering the reader the author's "statement of intent" in advance of a reading.[721] This statement clarifies and further justifies the title, narrowing down the broadly Roman-themed metamessages transmitted by the cover art and blurb into references that detail how the work should be read. These references both contextualise and guide the reader in how to use other introductory paratexts, such as maps, epigraphs, and contents.[722]

Prefaces appear to make the historical novel "solid and substantial," distinguishing what follows as historically authentic in much the same way as a frame individuates art.[723] Such a device, however, is far more divisive than at first appears. Comments on the story can range from reliable criticisms and/or endorsements relating to historical source material (signed by the author), to unreliable narratives about the discovery of lost manuscripts, which are presented to the reader as legitimate.[724] Metareference focuses attention on the preface's framing capabilities, the interpretative strategies initiated at a higher level that the reader then takes into the story. With prefaces, we are dealing with a device that educates the reader about the transmission of history not only through an honest discussion of archival research, historical accuracy, and creative licence, but also through wilful misrepresentation of what is – and is not – historical.[725] Prefaces are an ideal place to discover how the author has received the past they wish to represent, how they would like it to be remembered, and what differences they wish to make to the record. It is the preface, furthermore, understood as a piece of historiography, which signals to the reader where the

[718] Stevens: 2013, 25, see also 20.
[719] Boccardi: 2009, 13-14; see also Fleishman: 1971, 24, Wesseling: 1991, 41, and Hamnett: 2011, 98.
[720] Wolf: 2009, 68.
[721] Genette: 1997, 221-223 and 237.
[722] Ibid., 213, 197, and 209.
[723] Wolf: 2006, 299.
[724] Ibid., 303-304; see also MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 94 and Wolf: 2009, 66.
[725] Wolf: 2009, 66.

historical frame might be further activated throughout the story, regarding the words, deeds, and thoughts of historical figures. Instead of simply offering "narrative germs," as Genette asserted, the prefaces to historical novels offer 'historiographical germs' that can only be fully realised in the story after being recognised in the preface.[726] In order to analyse how the preface and its authorial voice affects what type of past the reader receives in their historical imagination, as well as what conception of history they come away with, I have chosen four novels whose prefaces acquaint the reader with the same historical figure – the controversial emperor Julian.

Prefacing Julian in History

"He will give his hearers what will hold their attention ... he will make what follows instructive and clear if he sets out the causes in advance and summarizes the main episodes. The best historians have prefaces of this type."[727]

– Lucian

Before we turn to these examples, let us take a broader view of Julian in literature. Genette devoted a substantial section of *Paratexts* to the history of prefaces.[728] I will not reiterate his discoveries. Rather, I wish to expand on his brief treatment of the prefaces of ancient historical writing, and return to the framing precedent they established. These prefaces, which as we saw in the Introduction appear in the earliest histories, played a vital role in the evolution of historical methodology, especially in how that methodology was made apparent.[729] Historical novelists, as we will see, are indebted to this tradition. It is therefore worth focusing on the commonality between the prefaces that introduce Julian in Ammianus Marcellinus' history of the later fourth century, and those that do the same in fiction. In particular, I am interested in how these prefaces – published almost two thousand years apart – frame Julian's character and impact, and how, in appealing to the truth of their representation, they mediate complex ideas of history.

I noted, when discussing cartography, that Ammianus devotes much more of his history to Julian than any emperor before or after, despite his short reign.[730] Let us see how he introduces, and at the same time defends, his decisive portrayal of the future emperor.

> The great improvements which his [Julian's] valour and good luck enabled him to bring about in Gaul surpass many of the heroic actions of former times, and I shall therefore describe them one by one in due order. I intend to employ all the resources of my modest talent in the hope that they will prove adequate for the purpose. My narrative, which is not a tissue of clever falsehoods, but an absolutely

[726] See Genette: 1997, 224 for more on how an "authorial interpretation" can "hang over" a reading; see also Robertson: 1994, 198, who highlights how prefaces are sites of contestation between competing authorities.
[727] Lucian, *How to Write History*, 54.
[728] Genette: 1997, 161-293.
[729] See especially Moles: 1993.
[730] Tougher: 2007, 6.

> truthful account based on clear evidence, will not fall far short of a panegyric, because it seems that the life of this young man was guided by some principle which raised him above the ordinary and accompanied him from his illustrious cradle to his last breath.[731]

This quotation, which comes from the preface to Book 16, is the first time Ammianus reflects on the character of Julian (we have met the man himself a few pages before). Ammianus tells us that Julian outshone the heroes of "former times," and goes on to name them. "In sagacity he was reckoned the reincarnation of Titus ... in the glorious outcome of his campaigns very like Trajan ... and in his striving after truth and perfection the equal of Marcus Aurelius."[732] Not only does Julian compare favourably with the emperors of Rome's 'Golden Age', but his accomplishments are such that Ammianus draws attention to his own fallings, the inability of historical writing to fully do justice to them.[733] These lofty claims, coupled with the fact that Julian "'protrudes like a mountain' from Ammianus' narrative," frame the double-edged comments that follow.[734] On the one hand, Ammianus' assertion that his history is "not a tissue of clever falsehoods" signals his adherence to the "standard cognitive imperative of historiography."[735] This involved providing "a truthful narrative of the past" based on "autopsy and inquiry."[736] The reader will find no exaggerations, Ammianus seems to say, no inventions on his part; Julian's achievements were preternatural, despite any "rhetorical *amplificatio*."[737] On the other hand, he says that his narrative "will not fall far short of a panegyric." This "Almost, but not quite" is what I am interested in, since it shows how different types of representation can permeate the metareferential level of historical writing, one that as we have seen, is concerned with truth.[738] Panegyrics, or "speech[s] of praise," were more interested in acclaiming imperial qualities than reporting factual truth, while their partisan lens led to omissions and occasionally the creation of outright fictions.[739] This is clearly problematic for the historian, but as Ross notes, "Ammianus does not claim here to write panegyric itself, merely that the type of events he describes resembles the *materia* commonly associated with panegyric. He deftly suggests the way in which these deeds could be read, whilst distancing his account from that other genre."[740] We see this distancing later, when Julian's actions are criticised by Ammianus, something that has enhanced his "reputation for impartiality," being exactly what "the panegyrist should on no account

[731] Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*, 16.1.
[732] Ibid., 16.1; see also Wallace-Hadrill: 1986, 23 on this panegyrical tradition.
[733] See Genette: 1997, 198-199 for more on this tradition in prefaces to historical and theoretical works.
[734] Ross: 2016, vi.
[735] Ibid., 1.
[736] Ibid.
[737] Ibid., 136.
[738] Wallace-Hadrill: 1986, 23.
[739] Tougher: 2007, 6; see also Nixon and Rodgers: 1994, 2, 34-35, 203 and 504.
[740] Ross: 2016, 136.

do."[741] However, in likening his portrayal of Julian to panegyric while simultaneously claiming it as historical truth, Ammianus sends conflicting messages regarding his representation of the past. History, it seems, can be presented in the form of panegyric, while panegyric can be enhanced by the addition of historical qualities. What we see here is an early experimentation with the use of authorial messages in prefatorial material to condition a reading of the content of history.[742] In particular, they ask us to situate Julian in relation to the emperors of the 'Golden Age', parallels drawn only a matter of pages after Ammianus quotes a blind woman prophesising, when she hears of Julian's arrival in Gaul, that "This is the man who will restore the temples of the gods."[743] Julian's fortunes and impact are so great as to destabilise the empire and its Christian trajectory. It takes only a small leap to see that Ammianus' representation of Julian prefigures his counterfactual appeal, due in no small part to Ammianus' decision to adjoinder history with praise in the form of panegyric. Ammianus' laudatory narrative decouples Julian from his historical context, associating him with a pan-historical potentiality, which is then related back to Julian's particular existence thanks to Ammianus' claims to historical truth. The negotiation between the two has led to Ammianus being credited with the "'creative and imaginative powers of a novelist.'"[744]

Prefacing Julian in Historical Fiction

"No man's life can be encompassed in one telling. There is no way to give each year its allotted weight, to include each event, each person who helped to shape a lifetime. What can be done is to be faithful in spirit to the record and try to find one's way to the heart of the man..."[745]
– Title sequence to *Gandhi*

As I have shown, the "intent to tell the truth" lies at the heart of historical reconstruction. This remains the case with narrative history as much as it does with historical fiction.[746] What the preface amounts to in this transaction is a "contract" regarding historical truth, one that the author writes and the reader signs.[747] In the following examples, a number of authors propose this contract as part of their attempt to represent Julian, claiming to honour "the intention and spirit" of the past despite their frequent misrepresentation (and invention) of historical documents.[748]

[741] Wallace-Hadrill: 1986, 23; also Tougher: 2007, 6 and Bowersock: 1978, 6-8.
[742] Ross: 2016, 212.
[743] Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*, 15.8.
[744] Ross: 2016, ix.
[745] Attenborough: 1982.
[746] Abbot: 2008, 146.
[747] Ibid.
[748] This quotation is from Power's 'Adapter's Note' that prefaces his version of Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean*; a similar phrase can be found in Sayers' preface to *The Emperor Constantine*.

Merezhkovsky, *Death of the Gods*

The preface to Merezhkovsky's *Death of the Gods* was written by his translator, Herbert Trench. It is, according to Genette's taxonomy, 'allographic'. If we want to apply a further definition, it is 'authentic' in that Trench is not a fictive character.[749] The function of such a preface is to justify the decision to translate the story. It becomes "a recommendation," not only of the story, but also of its author.[750] Taking the form of a presentation about the story, the preface describes Merezhkovsky's personal faith and situates him as Tolstoy and Dostoevsky's successor. Trench suggests *Death of the Gods* should be read as a novel of ideas that deals with "the Pagano-Christian dualism of our human nature" as it has manifested itself in history.[751] The metareferential position of Trench's preface, as well as his privileged position as translator, allows him to synthesise his reception of *Death of the Gods* with Merezhkovsky's own reception of late antiquity. The author, writes Trench, believed "European civilisation [had] been born of the tremendous conflict between ... the cult of Dionysus and the cult of Christ."[752] Merezhkovsky has "embodied this conflict" in three historical novels, the first of which "deals with the extraordinary career of the Roman Emperor, Julian the Apostate, who ... sought to revive the worship of the Olympians after Christianity had been adopted by Constantine the Great as the official religion of the Roman Empire."[753] Trench sets the scene, confirming that Julian's historical importance rests with his religious policies, but goes on to note that "Writers of genius who seem to write historical novels in reality are only transferring to the stage of the world a drama which is being played in their own souls."[754] The reason for transferring the drama is to show that "the struggle which is now going on in us is eternal."[755] The specifics of Julian's reign, including his conversion from Christianity to 'paganism', is dehistoricised by Trench so as to lend the story universality. At the same time, Trench proudly proclaims that Merezhkovsky "has succeeded in recreating the wonderful rich scenes and characters" of late antiquity, including "battles with wild German warriors round Strasburg" and "the interior of the baths at Antioch."[756] The reader is told Merezhkovsky himself travelled in the East to research his novel, and that his work builds on a Hellenic sensitivity and interest in Church history that originated in his youth. More than just a narrative précis, the metareferential messages contained in this preface frame the story as historically authentic based on personal inquiry and accuracy. They also separate out the clearly historical grounding of Julian from his purpose in the narrative. Merezhkovsky's credentials are the

[749] Genette: 1997, 178-179.
[750] Ibid., 264-265.
[751] Merezhkovski: [1895] 1997, 7.
[752] Ibid., 8.
[753] Ibid.
[754] Ibid.
[755] Ibid.
[756] Ibid., 9.

empowering factor that authorise him to transport the reader to the fourth century, while the preface helps to understand what Merezhkovsky does with late antiquity, his attempt to "highlight through hindsight" the "similarity" between that society and the reader's own.[757] The messages in the preface ask the reader to consider the "Pagano-Christian dualism" of their own nature in relation to Julian's universal example, to be self-reflexive readers simultaneously aware of a legitimised reconstruction of late antiquity, along with its didactic use in the present.

Vidal, *Julian*

There are two prefaces in Vidal's *Julian*, an 'Introduction' and a 'Note'. The former is what Genette termed a "*later* preface," added to subsequent editions.[758] It possesses a firmly autobiographical function, but also illustrates the "genesis of the text and [indicates] its sources." [759] Vidal opens the 'Introduction' with an anecdote of an encounter he had with the classical scholar M.I. Finley. Finley, apparently praised *Julian*, while also confirming – after Vidal asked about the reliability of one of Finley's colleague – that when it comes to ancient history, scholars "make most of it up."[760] At the outset, Vidal casts doubt on the aspirations of ancient history, enabling his approach to impinge on its territory by making paradoxical claims to truth (if academic work on ancient history relies on invention, his novel is no less 'historical'). He supports this with a rhetorical question ("Why write historical fiction instead of history?"), the answer to which relies on Finley's confession ("when dealing with periods so long ago, one is going to make a lot of it up anyway").[761]

The situation, however, is not quite as simple as this. Vidal continues: "Now, as every dullard knows, the historical novel is neither history nor a novel. History means footnotes and careful citations from others tenured in the field, while the 'serious' novel is about the daily lives of those who teach school and commit adultery."[762] Vidal reframes 'history' here as a performative dialogue by those who know what they are talking about (even if it is invented). This is contrasted with the novel, which earns Vidal's disdain for its limited scope ("imagination is not much admired in today's novels").[763] The reader learns that Vidal does not "care for historical novels," a disassociation that protects him from criticism aimed at those who embrace the genre's worst romantic excesses. In creating this dichotomy, and in distancing himself from the genre, Vidal reserves a unique space for *Julian*. Telling the reader that "*Julian* took years to write and my description of how Christianity was, in a sense, invented at a series of fourth-century synods was based on a thorough study of the

[757] Groot: 2010, 57.
[758] Genette: 1997, 174.
[759] Ibid., 247-248 and 251-253.
[760] Vidal: 1964, v.
[761] Ibid., vii.
[762] Ibid., v.
[763] Ibid.

primary sources," enables Vidal to claim the authority of history, understood in the second sense provided.[764] At the same time, Vidal reclaims imagination (which he considered non-existent in the contemporary novel) for representations of the historical and mythic past. In his own words: "Without the historical imagination even conventional history is worthless."[765] By demonstrating an interest in "the interaction between what is 'known' and what is made up," Vidal moves beyond the history-fiction dichotomy and suggests imagination plays a vital role regardless of the medium used to reconstruct the past.[766] How else do you picture what you *do* know happened?

Within this carefully negotiated overlap, Vidal introduces his subject. "Since I have never been an enthusiast of monotheism, the apostate emperor was the ideal protagonist."[767] Vidal establishes an intellectual affinity with Julian, who he claims has always been "an underground hero."[768] Julian's "attempt to stop Christianity and revive Hellenism ... exerts still a romantic appeal."[769] Vidal places his novel within the wider context of this reception, showing how the emperor has been used across history to symbolise resistance. In addition to Julian's appeal, Vidal focuses on the fourth century and the establishment of Christianity. "We are today very much the result of what they were then," he says, drawing a parallel between past and present, a gap that "the unique adventure of Julian's life" helps to bridge.[770] At the end of the 'Introduction', Vidal notes that the final reason why he writes historical fiction is the joy when "a pattern starts to emerge."[771] Vidal believes that this 'pattern', revealed through research, sheds light on the human condition, on the historical "phase[s]" of our race.[772] Julian, it is implied, identifies the end of one.

In the following 'Note', Vidal offers an overture to Robert Graves, especially Graves' preface in *Claudius the God* where he "struck back with a long bibliography," attempting to silence critics who thought he had only used Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars* to write *I, Claudius*.[773] Vidal similarly wishes to "anticipate those who might think that one's only source was the history of Ammianus Marcellinus (or even of Edward Gibbon)."[774] The 'Note' is accompanied by a '*Partial* Bibliography' [italics my own], inserted as part of the procedure of regulating the historical novel through the novelist's academic credentials. From this, it is possible to see how Vidal has received Julian's period, how he wishes to deviate from the known brands, both Ammianus' military history, known to be the

[764] Vidal: 1964, vi.
[765] Ibid., vii.
[766] Groot: 2010, 113.
[767] Vidal: 1964, vi.
[768] Ibid., xi.
[769] Ibid.
[770] Ibid., xii.
[771] Ibid., vii.
[772] Ibid.
[773] Ibid., xi; for more on Graves' use of prefaces, see Bennett: 2015, 27-28; see also Genette: 1997, 211, who notes that another famous historical novelist, Tolstoy, claimed he could produce his sources if challenged.
[774] Ibid., xi.

"dominant ancient narrative of Julian's reign," and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, itself "largely responsible for ensuring Ammianus' dominance."[775] At the same time, Vidal refocuses attention on these works as the primary means to understand Julian outside the Christian tradition.[776] More than just inspiration or an attempt to prove credentials, Vidal's bibliography and analysis of key volumes directs the reader's reception of the works he used to create *Julian*, and sows the seeds for future identification of these works in the story. The reader learns that "The Emperor Julian's life is remarkably well documented ... Three volumes of his letters and essays survive," which foreshadows the appearance of Julian's 'journal'. Further, they are informed of the "vivid accounts" Libanius wrote of Julian.[777] Vidal has Libanius contribute half the narrative through a fictional correspondence with the contemporary philosopher Priscus. Vidal's claims attempt to establish a correlation between what the reader will encounter in the story, and what Libanius actually wrote.

A final point on the 'Note': Vidal uses it to make a further historiographical intervention – proleptically, in terms of narrative order – regarding Julian's death. "For those readers who will search in vain for Julian's famous last words, 'Thou hast conquered, Galilean!,' he never said them. Theodoret must take credit for this fine rhetoric, composed a century after Julian's death."[778] In removing heavily romanticised additions to the record, Vidal demonstrates his awareness of – and attempts to circumvent – the "hindrance" of apocryphal stories in order to present the reader with as faithful a reconstruction as possible.[779] As Vidal says, "Though I have written a novel ... I have tried to stay with the facts, only occasionally shifting things around."[780] The preface allows Vidal to make apparent the "historiographical work" the novelist undertakes when choosing what to include or exclude.[781] This editorial insight, which acts as a metareferential comment on the construction of the narrative, "represents ... the search for the past."[782] In ruling against Theodoret, Vidal "struggle[s] with and against the meanings imposed" by his "materials."[783] To remain true to the events surrounding Julian's death, Vidal reveals a conventional approach to historical methodology, denying Theodoret's apocryphal tale. The trade-off reconfigures Julian by activating "a different paratextual perimeter," one that holds up to scrutiny and carries its own historical weight.[784] Vidal signals in his preface that moments of historicity can be found throughout his story (presumably there will be

[775] For more on this, see Ross: 2016, v-vi.
[776] Ibid., vi, ix, and 201.
[777] Vidal: 1964, xi; see Ross: 2016, 175 for more on Libanius and Julian and the creation of important narratives surrounding the emperor, from the 'Apostate' to the 'philosopher'.
[778] Ibid., xii; see also Genette: 1980, 39-40 for a discussion of narrative prolepsis.
[779] Lukács: 1989, 168.
[780] Vidal: 1964, xi.
[781] Groot: 2016, 22-23; this is one of the central contentions of de Groot's *Rethinking History*.
[782] Wesseling: 1991, vii.
[783] I am indebted here and below to Gray: 2010, 145, for ideas concerning paratexts and fan fiction, and the possible effect of spoilers on the consumption of popular culture; see also Robertson: 1994, 149.
[784] Gray: 2010, 132.

more, much like the 'Partial Bibliography'), and therefore that the reader can read the fiction historically, at least according to the terms of 'history' established by Vidal. It is no coincidence that Vidal chose the narrative climax of the novel – Julian's death – to comment on his historiographical choices. It acts like a spoiler, revealing not only what will happen, but what will *not* happen. The reader then reads "in-the-know," for both the pleasure of the historical narrative and the bartering of wits between the narrators, rather than for the plot.[785] Such an admission ultimately increases the "production values" of the historical fiction, revealing 'the making of' *Julian*.[786]

Ford, *Gods and Legions*

The 'Historical Note' at the start of *Gods and Legions* is but one of a number of introductory prefaces. The others are part of a complex frame narrative that establishes the provenance of the story, presented as the 'found' journal of Caesarius (the Emperor Julian's physician in the story). The 'Historical Note' is clearly written by the author and stands above this frame narrative, able to comment on its construction and the story within. It provides useful information for the reader to be able to understand the novel's "conjectures" regarding history.[787] Ford's 'authorial' preface leads with the importance of Julian ("Of all the great figures of antiquity, few are so compelling yet enigmatic"), echoing Ammianus by glorifying his subject and introducing what appears to be a character study.[788] Ford juxtaposes Julian's traits ("a brilliant and ruthless general who never picked up a sword until well into his adulthood"), explores the heightened religiosity and reception of the fourth century ("one of the most wrenching periods in European history"), and shows awareness of source criticism ("Julian came to power, by some accounts reluctantly, by others through his own cunning"), suggesting that what follows is less a novel, and more an impartial critique of the type found in history.[789] The preface affirms history as the domain of 'great men' who direct the fortune of empires. Following in Ammianus' footsteps, Ford proclaims: "It was a time when the Empire stood poised on a balance – a determined, sustained push by a strong leader could take it in either of two directions. Julian was such a leader, a man of action and resolve, the shrewdest and most strong-willed emperor since Constantine or perhaps long before, a man with an agenda."[790] Julian is framed as the one who could win the fight for Rome's pagan soul: "where walked the Emperor, there followed the world."[791] The 'Note' ends on this cliff-hanger, refusing to 'spoil' the story.

[785] Gray: 2010, 149.
[786] Ibid.
[787] Wesseling: 1991, 105.
[788] Ford: 2002, ix; see also Genette: 1997, 178-179 on 'authorial' prefaces.
[789] Ibid., ix-x.
[790] Ibid., x; see also Groot: 2016, 23.
[791] Ibid.

Like Vidal, Ford sets his work up in the style of an historical enquiry. This stylisation carries over into the frame narrative, which signals, through a metareferential aside, the historicity of the 'found' journal. The reader is told, in a letter sent by Gregory of Nazianzus (a Christian saint and contemporary of Julian) to Pope Siricius that Gregory's brother, Caesarius, kept a journal while in service to "the damnable pagan and apostate Julian."[792] This 'journal' forms the backbone of the story, and is implied to be an impartial account of Julian. From his language, Gregory represents the "religious fervour" alluded to in the 'Note', while Caesarius' journal, acting as a "confessional of sorts" (an allusion to Saint Augustine) perplexes Gregory, who is unsure whether his brother should be proclaimed a sinner or saint.[793] Both the 'Note' and the frame narrative work hard to negate the fictional frame evoked by the genre, placement, title, and cover of the novel. They appear to perform the work of the historian, presenting the reader with documentary evidence written by credible sources. At each level, the reader encounters a metareferential message regarding the historical truthfulness of the story. These levels are meant to be 'safe' from fictional contamination, a place to trust the author to speak honestly about their process. What we see here, however, is fiction infiltrating the 'Note' and the frame narrative *in order to* construct an alternative historical frame. Not only is there a false source presented as authentic by Gregory: "such document I enclose herewith, entreating only that you guard it as carefully as its contents merit," but the 'Note' itself frustrates a historicist reading of Julian by ending on a cliff-hanger.[794] By implying that Julian *could* change the course of the empire, Ford sows the seeds for both a tragic reading of the emperor (he fails to restore the gods), and also a counterfactual one. There is still, the 'Note' implies – perhaps always – the possibility that Julian could destabilise history.

Spector, *Who Killed Apollo and Julian Augustus?*

Spector presents a comparable approach in his preface, entitled 'Translator's Explanatory Note'. Here, Spector offers an 'authorial' preface written in the first person, which tells the story of his interest in Classics, desire to write a "history of drug therapy," and his discovery, as part of this research project, of a lost history of the emperor Julian, written by his physician Oribasius. Spector discloses how he came across the manuscript, concocting a plausible story of a journey to a monastery near Parma in Italy.[795] Oribasius did, in fact, write of the life of Julian, as Spector notes, referencing the Loeb edition of Eunapius' *Lives of the Sophists*. Spector further contextualises his discovery by letting the reader know the history was "proscribed" by the Church because it

[792] Ford: 2002, 1.
[793] Ibid., ix-x and 1.
[794] Ibid., 1.
[795] Spector: 2006, 1-3; see also Genette: 1997, 280, which sets out the process for this type of preface.

"definitively answers" who assassinated Julian, and accounts for the "final triumph of Christianity," which, it is suggested, would not have been possible had Julian lived.[796] "Indeed, had Julian prevailed, I would not have visited this monastery for there would be no monastery."[797] Spector claims he had to make a financial donation to keep the manuscript so as to translate it from the Greek. He sets himself up as the authority to transcribe the manuscript, not just linguistically, but also editorially, which helps to further "validate the text ... by suggesting that [the author] has devoted time and care to a careful representation of an 'original'."[798] The manuscript is then presented as the story; the unadulterated words of Oribasius on Julian's assassination.

In creating this historical frame for the story, Spector's preface throws up a number of uncertainties. On the one hand, Oribasius did write a history, and, though it is lost, the narrative of discovery correctly ties it to a turning point in European history.[799] On the other, Spector merges the title of this work with the title of the novel – they are the same (*Who Killed Apollo and Julian Augustus?*). There is an element of self-awareness at play within this approach to the discovery and dissemination of a lost work, a nod to the tradition of 'found' manuscripts in historical fiction as well as their importance, if ratified, as sources for history. The false narrative of the discovery of a real historical artefact introduces problems relating to gaps in the documentary record by claiming that Oribasius' lost history answers "once and for all" the question of *Who Killed Apollo and Julian Augustus?*[800] Spector, as the translator, appears to stand back following a summary of the historical context needed to understand the work, his voice seeming to give way to the ancient historian-detective Oribasius, to speak and deliver the results of his enquiry.

Unlike in *Gods and Legions*, where the 'Historical Note' justifies the frame narrative that follows, here the tasks have been collapsed into one, and the translator positioned as the 'editor' of the text that follows. Fiction once again permeates the metareferential level of the preface, one the reader expects to use to sort out what is made up and what is discovered. In Spector's case, the confusion reaches an even higher level, with the preface retrospectively blurring the title of the novel with an ancient source. Working both ways, the preface, as a fiction framed historically, gives way to other fictions framed historically (the title and the story), making it increasingly difficult to separate out what is true, even when the novel provides clear levels in the form of prefaces, notes, and frame narratives. This is compounded by the fact that both Ford and Spector make use of *believable* inventions to frame their stories, citing letters written in the style of actual historical figures, as well as providing a convincing narrative of the discovery and dissemination of sources that

[796] Spector: 2006, 2-3.
[797] Ibid., 3.
[798] Grace: 1998, 482.
[799] See Ross: 2016, 167.
[800] Spector: 2006, 2-3.

existed. The preface, as a fiction framed historically, promises, in a strange way, to be more historical – more true to the past – than has so far been possible. They are credible exaggerations based on the enticing possibilities raised by the period, and particularly by Julian. These prefaces thus break down the distinction between one framing discourse and another; these novels are sold as fiction, but contain history, understood as the domain of sources that refer readers to how things actually were. Rather than suggesting they are both the same, however, this act of blurring encourages the reader to think self-referentially, not so much about the constructedness of history, but about legitimate ways, in the present, to understand the thoughts and actions of historical agents. This is how history comes down to us, the prefaces say, while "play[ing] upon the desire for lost plenitude."[801] What answers might we have if certain works were rediscovered?

Postface

While the techniques of the preface may vary, the metareferential potential of these devices allows us to think about how the author/editor wishes the historical novel to be received, along with its subject matter. If we read across the above examples, patterns begin to emerge regarding the representation of Julian. His romantic and counterfactual appeal destabilises the historical continuum of the fourth century. Julian connects the fourth century to modernity through the possibility that had he survived, Christianity may never have 'triumphed' and we might be living in a more enlightened age. From this, we can deduce that prefaces to historical fiction have as much a "didactic" function as those of historical writing, aiming to persuade the reader of a particular interpretation of historical figures and their periods.[802] On a macro level, prefaces model "a certain type of reading," in this case, that Julian's fortunes are tied inextricably to the grand narratives of religion and the rise and fall of empires; on a micro level, they empower the reader "to engage in the dialogue which the author is proposing … to check the references … and compare his or her findings with those of the author."[803] As Ford and Spector's examples show, fiction can infiltrate this level and replicate or mirror this act of framing. Either way, what these prefaces achieve through their metareferential messages is to establish a way of reading the contents of a historical novel according to predetermined ideas of what makes a text historical. This can be understood in a number of ways, with the story recreating the voice of ancient writers who experienced events, acting as a narrative continuation of a 'Historical Note', or offering historiographical insight into what is and is not historical in the story that follows. In doing so, prefaces continue the ancient historiographical tradition of realising different levels of historical truth, of establishing a methodology to follow. In

[801] Kennedy and O'Gorman: 2015, 54.
[802] Robertson: 1994, 149.
[803] Carrard quoted in Wake: 2016, 89.

many cases, the reader is encouraged to be a self-aware participant in the consumption of historical-fiction, but this does not undermine their reception of the story as a type of history.[804] As we will see in Chapter 3, awareness that the story is a representation is in fact necessary for the moment of frame-breaking that blurs the story they consume with other levels of historical truth.

[804] We saw a few examples of this in the case studies examined here; there are, however, more overt examples in Waugh's preface to *Helena* (1984, 9-11), where he announces "This is a novel ... just something to be read; in fact a legend," and in Bradley Bradley, M. and Paxson's *Priestess of Avalon* (2011, vi): "This is the story of a legend"; see also Genette: 1997, 215 on prefaces "professing the work's fictiveness," and Wake: 2016, 91, who explores how historical fiction identifies as fiction to "institute the border that it is seen to transgress."

§7 Intertitles and Running Titles

"Individual titles are points of reference in the fluid structure of a book that thrives on incompletion."[805]

– Giancarlo Maiorino

At the beginning of this chapter, we explored how titles function as an integrated system of references that share the capacity to structure recollections of the past. Let us now consider titles that appear *in medias res*. These internal titles (or 'intertitles') further the dialogue established by the main title, assembling the historical contents of the story according to thematic tropes. I contend here that the intertitles of historical novels are indicative of attempts to partition historical moments and adopt systems of emplotment, with temporal, geographical, and epistolographic conventions, helping to enhance immersion and the transmission of meaning. To see how this works during the reading process, I have split my case study into three groups that reflect trends in internal titling. The first consists of works that do not possess much in the way of intertitles, the second encompasses works split into 'books' with only minimal chapter headings, while the third collects those with detailed chapter headings that draw on historical figures and events.

"In mediating the contact between text and user, the artefact sets the terms under which both its featured text and its contextualising self are viewed."[806] Breaks in the text have always been a feature of writing due to the materiality of the tablet, scroll, and codex.[807] Aside from 'natural' divisions created by these mediums, however, texts have also been subdivided by intertitles. As we saw when discussing contents pages, this practice began in antiquity, with the work of poets and historians given numbered 'books' that served as both "articulation points and as a reference system."[808] It is useful to think of these as the predecessors of the highly organised breaks that are marked by intertitles in modern books, though the transition from scroll to codex, where pages could be numbered and multiple 'books' bound together, certainly allowed the practical uses of intertitles to come to the fore.[809] Numbered division, rather than thematic titling, became the norm, a tradition that the novel in particular carried forward. *Julian* (Vidal) fits this mould, as does *The Philosopher Prince* by (Waters), *Death of the Gods* (Merezhkovsky), *Murder Imperial* (Doherty), and *Constantine: The Miracle of the Flaming Cross* (Slaughter).

Genette suggested that the "absence of intertitles signals an intention to maintain classical dignity."[810] On the surface, it appears that the five novels identified above prefer to let their content

[805] Maiorino: 2008, 55.
[806] Haslam: 2005, 143.
[807] Ibid., 144; see also Butler: 2011, 7-11.
[808] Ibid., 156; also Higbie: 2010, 16-24, Whitmarsh: 2005, 588-589, Small: 1997, 11-33, and Bonner: 1920, 73.
[809] Genette: 1997, 298-300.
[810] Ibid., 315; Genette is referring here to poetry, but the point remains valid for other types of literature.

speak for itself, relying on the strength of tradition to identify and impart value to their numerical divisions, with most novels divided into 'books' as well as numbered chapters.[811] Genette called such chapters 'mute chapters', though a better term might be 'taciturn'.[812] While the 'book'/chapter titles themselves do not 'speak' other than to register a sense of unity and progression and/or allude to tradition, they give way, at the top of the page, to running titles. This space, reserved for chapter titles, is instead taken up by the title of the work, repeated on every (or every other) page. "Running heads," according to Genette, "serve as reminders ... of the general title of the work."[813] Above all, though, they entitle what appears untitled, i.e. the chapters identified by numbers.[814] While meaning accrues more slowly around the titles of books without running headers because of their latency, readers may internalise running titles more quickly because the feedback loop is non-stop; running titles *apply themselves to each and every chapter*, continually reminding the reader of the theme of the novel, and promoting a reading of the past based on these notions.[815]

A further observation before we move on to the second group of works: although the use of numbers to designate chapters may seem a choice between either/or (I either apply the number 1 to the first chapter, or I name it), there is still room for creativity. In particular, a third of the novels in my case study have dispensed with Arabic digits in favour of Roman numerals. Those areas of the world that possess cultural affinity with Rome are likely well-acquainted with such numerals, and so the choice might go unnoticed, especially since it fulfils the same purpose. As Genette suggested: "One sign of the paratext's effectiveness is no doubt its transparency: its transitivity. The best intertitle, the best title in general, is perhaps the one that goes unnoticed."[816] It is, however, far from a coincidence that works set in late antiquity are marked by Roman numerals and share the same numerical orthography as Roman texts, inscriptions, and civic buildings. Over the centuries, these numerals have appeared in all manner of contexts, and remain visible thanks to their extensive reuse. The decision to label the contents of a work using an old-world numeric system keys into the realist tradition and readerly obsession with recognisable, period-authentic terminology. Roman numerals denote a historical entryway into the past, much as they identified ancient city gateways. Further, as the numerals increase, they ask the reader to count *differently*, signifying the divergent reading strategies required to make sense of the past. The shift from Arabic to Roman numerals may not be as marked as the shift from numbers to words, but even this subtle segue between numerical

[811] See Genette: 1997, 305 and 312.
[812] Ibid., 306.
[813] Ibid., 316.
[814] Ibid.
[815] Eco: 1980, 541.
[816] Genette: 1997, 315-316.

traditions marks an important decision on the author or publisher's part to present a narrative that looks and acts the part expected, immersing the reader and papering over anachronisms.

Michael Ford's *Gods and Legions* and Stephen Baxter's *Emperor* both make use of Roman numerals when labelling chapters. In addition, their chapters are divided between 'books', each of which has been given a name. These novels straddle the divide between numerical codification and thematic arrangement, and are a useful example of how historical novels frequently draw on competing traditions to further define, justify, and legitimise their story. Let us take *Emperor* to begin with. The reader is given a basic structure of three 'books'. 'Book 1' is titled 'Invader', 'Book 2' 'Builder', and 'Book 3' 'Emperor'. Each 'book' also has a subtitle, signalling adherence to a chronological approach to history: 'AD 43-70', 'AD 122-138', and 'AD 314-337'.[817] I noted earlier that the map in *Emperor* allows readers to read across the historical strata of Roman Britain, since it capturesfour centuries of change. The intertitles, in conjunction with the map, determine which temporal aspect of Roman Britain readers are meant to see (both on the map and in the imagination). They categorise the history of Roman Britain according to overarching themes (military invasion, imperial expansion and consolidation, domination through autocracy), and tie these to specific moments in time. Taken together, the intertitles construct a teleology of Roman Britain, charting powerful associations between thematic substance and the historical contents of the story. In 'Invader', the Emperor Claudius's invasion of Britain takes centre stage, while 'Builder' jumps forward in time to relate the construction of Hadrian's Wall. 'Emperor' explores the culmination of these actions through the novel's climatic depiction of a fictional assassination attempt against Constantine. The repetition of 'Emperor' as the final intertitle in a book entitled *Emperor* identifies Constantine as the primary recipient. While Claudius and Hadrian were also emperors, Constantine is the one implicated in the blurb, which announces the existence of a prophecy that "relates to the death of an emperor."[818] Constantine survives the fictionalised assassination, but in the process, "'history shudders.'"[819] The novel plays with the idea that "If the true Church was to survive, Constantine had to die."[820] 'Emperor' is the teleological end-point for both Roman Britain and 'true' Christianity. As one of the characters remarks: "'If Constantine had been killed, Christianity might not have been incorporated into the empire, and the capital might not have been moved east. History would have been changed – the history of the whole world, for all time.'"[821]

Counterfactual novels tend to congregate around specific historical figures or events, as we have seen with Julian. Roman emperors exert a seductive pull over the imagination, with authors

[817] *The Living Wood* also follows this pattern, with all six books accompanied by a date.
[818] Baxter: 2007, blurb.
[819] Ibid., 264.
[820] Ibid., 251.
[821] Ibid., 275.

using their lives (or potential lives) to determine what might have been. The intertitles in *Emperor* help to direct the reader in understanding the logical progression of history (at least in terms of the micro-example of Roman Britain), while also highlighting Constantine's apparently pivotal role in the course of Western history. As Frank Kermode said, "[dates] help us find ends and beginnings ...when we associate them with empire we are celebrating our desire for human kinds of order."[822] The intertitles and accompanying dates in *Emperor* orientate the reaer in relation to the novel's obsession with Roman imperialism ("[the] army was a vast mixing-up of races ... and yet they all worked in harmony under the command of a good Roman") and foretelling of British imperialism ("Londinium as the capital of the Roman Empire! The thought was so breathtaking it silenced them for a moment").[823] At the same time, the intertitles apply artificial bookends to historical phenomena, drawing on long-standing criticisms of Constantine to situate him as the moment when things went wrong for Christianity. His life becomes the novel's counterfactual allure.

The intertitles of *Gods and Legions* are more varied and extensive than those of *Emperor*, but function in much the same way. The first and last 'books' of the novel, 'Genesis' and 'Revelation', explicitly connect the novel to the framing hypotext of the Bible. Kermode aptly noted that "The Bible is a familiar model of history. It begins at the beginning ... and ends with a vision of the end."[824] Since the novel tells the story of the emperor Julian, the reader is presented with the beginning and end of his reign as emperor. The use of Biblical intertitles also implies that the novel should be couched in *Biblical* terms, that what is at stake is nothing short of the cosmic struggle between good and evil. The historical events contained within (the rise of Julian, his brief reign as emperor, and death at the hands of Caesarius, the Christian narrator) are scaled up by the intertitles, positioning the reign of Julian firmly within broader debates about the nature of faith, Christian ideas of history, and scriptural exegesis. As noted in the previous section, the framing narrative establishes the authority of the 'found' journal of Caesarius through a letter sent from a Christian contemporary of Julian to Pope Siricius. The framing narrative also notes that Caesarius' journal is a "confessional of sorts."[825] Since the journal begins with the intertitles, it is Caesarius who administers their religio-historical framework of interpretation as part of his attempt to comprehend his relationship with Julian. The novel is clearly indebted to Saint Augustine's model in *The Confessions*. Caesarius, the reader is told, is a classically educated Christian whose journal offers insight into his tormented soul. Julian is presented as his test, which he ultimately rises to; first, by attempting to change the emperor's mind about Christianity; second, when that fails, by dispatching Julian and embracing the

[822] Kermode: 1966, 11.
[823] Baxter: 2007, 46 and 294.
[824] Kermode: 1966, 6.
[825] Ford: 2002, ix-x and 1.

'simple' Christian life. The Biblical intertitles thus reinforce Julian's revival of traditional Roman religion as a significant moment in the battle for religious and ideological supremacy.

Aside from 'Genesis' and 'Revelation', *Gods and Legions* demonstrates another common intertitular trend: that of naming 'books' after cities and geographical areas where the action takes place.[826] The headings 'Gaul', 'Strasbourg', and 'Paris' encourage the reader to navigate the past spatially, referring them back to the map and its complex palimpsest of the empire.[827] They are necessary for helping audiences "navigate the split spaces of a text" that transition between time and place, within both the storyworld, *and also* the historical space separating the present from ancient Rome.[828] Place connects us to the past; the intertitles manipulate this, creating a transactional situation where readers imaginatively travel within the story and the past, traversing historical space. They also provide a travel narrative, much like in Herodotus' *Histories*, one that shows how interconnected stories from diverse geographical locations can be part of a larger historical narrative.[829] In terms of the historical contents of *Gods and Legions*, the intertitles trace Julian's rise to power. Starting in Gaul, they lead the reader on a journey from Julian's first official position as Caesar in the Western province to his victory over the Alamanni outside Strasbourg, and, finally, to his unwarranted ascension to the position of Augustus, instigated by the troops under his command in Paris. The intertitles, while guiding the reader through the story, at the same time chart the seismic shifts in the balance of power that led to Julian's rise, grounding such moments firmly in the landscape of the past (the use of Gaul rather than France or Germany is telling). Alongside these geographical intertitles, there are thematic ones. 'Bellum Civile' ('Civil War') is the title to 'Book Seven'. It is a direct quotation of the title of Caesar's commentaries on the civil war between himself and Pompey, as well as the alternative title of Lucan's epic on the same topic, the *Pharsalia*. The use of 'Bellum Civile' adds resonance to 'Book Seven', which narrates the civil war between Julian and his uncle, the emperor Constantius. It places this civil conflict in the wider context of Rome's internal collisions, establishing lines of communication and relation that in turn broaden the scope and meaning of Julian's clash with Constantius. Further, in referring to such a specific, monumental event (the fall of the Republic and the assassination of Caesar), the intertitle establishes a parallel between the two wars, the implication being that this will lead to an equally significant change (the end of paganism) and an equally bloody end for the victor (Julian dies at Caesarius' hands).

A useful way of thinking about the active functions of the intertitles explored so far is to compare them to the loading screens between the levels of videogames, which often depict

[826] *In This Sign Conquer* follows a similar pattern, though in this case, each chapter bears a place-name.
[827] For more on paratexts and their navigational function, see Drucker: 2008, 121-138; see also Genette: 1997, 296 on 'mechanical' intertitles, which he lists without much in the way of investigation.
[828] Freedgood: 2010, 405.
[829] Dewald: 1998, xii.

upcoming scenes. These screens, like the predominantly blank pages between chapters where intertitles appear, highlight the fictionality of the story, its constructedness and limitations – the edges and ends of the medium in question. Despite this, loading screens and intertitlular pages, because they attempt to avert the audience's gaze from the constraints of the medium, ask the reader to look at *something* rather than at nothing. This has the power to extend the boundaries of the story, depicting what the audience will see next; literally, in the case of loading screens, and more imaginatively with intertitles, setting the scene in a reader's mind. As Harpold argues, "That they [loading screens] can convince us ... that there is more in the gameworld than meets the eye when there is, exactly, nothing more, demonstrates unequivocally that narrativity cannot be completely separated from mediality."[830] Intertitular pages and their contents demonstrate that something as essential as book division can shape the historical imagination.

One final point needs to be made in relation to the directorial function of intertitles: that the act of "noting *where* one is ... determines the meaning or value attributed to elements in the story."[831] Put another way, intertitles, much like other paratexts, are important not just for what they signify, but also for their position. Their spatial orientation signals the methods by which readers should interpret them and the content that follows. The intertitles of the three 'books' in Bradley and Paxson's *Priestess of Avalon* provide a trajectory of interior character development. 'The Way to Love', 'The Way to Power', and 'The Way to Wisdom' divide the novel according to the maturation of a life, in this case of the empress Helena, Constantine's mother. Bradley and Paxson's alternative history begins with Helena training in the mystic arts on the legendary island of Avalon, presented as a proto-feminist utopia. In the first 'book', she falls in love with Constantius Chlorus, Constantine's father. Helena leaves Avalon for him, only to be cast aside in favour of Constantius' second wife in 'The Way to Power'. This 'book' takes the reader through Constantine's early years, showing how Helena aids him with her magic, helping him with his destiny, which coincides with her own elevation to empress dowager. The final 'book' weaves history and fantasy together by presenting the rise of Constantine and Christianity against the decline of spiritualism and magic contained in a single maternal Goddess, which the novel clearly separates from paganism. The novel presents itself as a spiritual manifesto, a learning curve for Helena who gains wisdom only when she returns to become a priestess once again (the intertitles thus intersect with the novel's title). As Helena muses at the end, when saying farewell to a Christian friend: "It would be no use to tell her that there was a place beyond all such divisions where Truth was One."[832] The 'ways' are methods, as well as paths towards a new understanding of the past and its relationship to the present,

[830] Harpold: 2008, 104.
[831] Drucker: 2008, 123.
[832] Bradley and Paxson: 2011, 381.

highlighting the authors' attempts to construct a revisionist feminist history. The authors "'writ[e] back, bringing their subjects [both Helena and their own spirituality] from darkness to light."[833]

Bradley and Paxson's intertitles demonstrate one type of 'objective voice' used to (re)direct readers through the historical contents of the novel. Another type can be found in Brand's *In This Sign Conquer*, where the intertitles follow a historiographical trend. Part 1 is entitled 'Rome – Mistress of the World', Part 2 'The Rise of Constantine', and Part 3 'The First Christian Emperor'. These intertitles show that the divisions imposed by historians on the past – ones necessary for sense, though problematic in their simplicity – are co-opted into the historical novel's mechanisms of representation. Collectively, they draw on the 'objective voice' of history, seeming to proclaim – thanks to the definitive nature of the statements – that this is how things were. They underscore how the historical frame can be activated at various points throughout a reading of the story thanks to historiographical markings readers readily associate with the past. They have the power to strengthen immersion, maintaining the illusion of authentic reconstruction.

Epistolary novels, due to their format, afford different ways of thinking about the framing potential of intertitles in historical fiction. I wish to account for the practice of naming chapters – or 'historical letters' – after their apparent author. Both *Emperor*, by Colin Thubron, and *Julian*, by Gore Vidal, are constructed from letters and journals in epistolary fashion.[834] In *Emperor*, there are no clear chapter divisions. Instead, each section of text is headed by the names of historical individuals involved in correspondence relating to Constantine's early campaign against Maxentius before he became undisputed emperor, along with the date and place of writing. Alternatively, sections of text are identified as part of the 'journal' of the emperor Constantine. *Julian* follows a similar pattern. Each chapter is sub-divided, initially by the correspondence between Libanius (the famous teacher of rhetoric) and Priscus (a late antique philosopher), and subsequently by the inclusion of Julian's 'memoir'. Vidal breaks this up by having Libanius and Priscus continue their conversation in notes appended to passages from the memoir, notes that that clarify, expand, or challenge Julian's Persian campaign narrative. To begin with, these intertitles affect a historical verisimilitude.[835] In both novels, the reader is presented with a social history of late antiquity, coupled with an (auto)biography of Constantine and Julian. Their 'journals', meanwhile, draw authority from those that Caesar wrote on campaign, while the letters evoke the authenticity of ancient epistolography.[836] Scott famously used prefaces to move his project away from "the idle novels and romances of the

[833] Groot: 2010, 70; see also Bradley and Paxson: 2011, vii for a brief insight into the authors' religious views.
[834] For a thorough investigation of the epistolary tradition in fiction, see Abbott: 1984.
[835] Abbott: 1984, 18-20.
[836] See Walsh: 2006, xv-xxxv.

day," and towards a sense of history as something alive on the page, brought back from the dead.[837] One means by which he achieved this was to present creative work as an amalgamation of historical artefacts (letters, commentaries, sources). This instituted what has been called the 'authenticity effect' of historical fiction.[838] While this trope predates Scott and can be found in Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and Richardson's *Pamela*, it betrays a heightened awareness – in an age when book production exploded – of the need for a personal connection with "an authentic, unrepeatable act of [historic] creation."[839] "Somehow, the historical novel must look like it is the original."[840]

We need, however, to tackle the idea that making use of authenticating tropes in historical fiction is *only* an act of verisimilitude, one which readers either sign up to because they are "in thrall to its illusions," or go along with, seeing as they do, "through the fiction."[841] It is not just the appearance of historical truth that is on offer, but a sideways commentary on how material has come down to us. The intertitles of *Emperor* and *Julian* capture the network of correspondence that passed between the elite of the ancient world, and which gravitated especially towards the figure of the emperor. Both novels represent the literary stage on which pagans and Christians hashed out their ideas and fought to relegate each other to oblivion.[842] They perform a snapshot of the interconnectedness a literary education made available, as well as a meta-fictional commentary on how sources survive, and especially on how letter collections gain historical meaning. Gibson recently emphasised our reliance on later editors for the organisation of ancient letter collections. Collections were often published after the death of their author, and arranged in a non-linear fashion according to the name of the recipient, or perhaps by theme.[843] It is only much later that editors "release[d] the historiographical or biographical potential of the letters" by rearranging them chronologically.[844] Vidal and Thubron, in presenting a chronological narrative through letters and journals, perform this act for the reader with invented material.[845] The letters offer a retrospective, ancient biographical sketch of Julian and Constantine thanks to their arrangement, albeit one supplemented by a modern psychoanalytic approach.[846] The intertitles therefore mediate an idea of history based on primary research into archives and published documents that help to draw out a specific narrative supported by eye-witness accounts and the 'voice' of emperors.

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[837] Scott: 1820, v; see also Hamnett: 2011, 36 and 98, and Wesseling: 1991, 43.
[838] See Duncan: 2003, 96-102.
[839] Ibid., 102; see also Hamnett: 2011, 99.
[840] Groot: 2016, 16; see also Duncan: 2003, 101 and Boccardi: 2009, 13-14; for a longer discussion of the former, including examples, see Maxwell: 2009, 56-57; see also Bennett: 2015, 27-28 for a discussion of how Robert Graves makes use of the latter trope to authenticate his novels on the emperor Claudius.
[841] Duncan: 2003, 107.
[842] See Sandwell: 2007.
[843] See Gibson: 2012a and Gibson: 2012b; see also Sogno: 2014.
[844] Gibson: 2012b, 58.
[845] Maiorino: 2008, 287; see also Groot: 2016, Genette: 1997, 302, and Derrida: 1992, 189.
[846] Browning: 1975, 235.

We move, finally, to novels with formal chapter titles. There are three that make use of this literary tradition, *Helena* by Evelyn Waugh, *Who Killed Apollo and Julian Augustus?* by Reynold Spector, and *The Dragon Waiting* by John Ford. Each follows in the footsteps of Scott in that their authors make use of short intertitles, often just one word, to frame the coming chapter.[847] The result is that they appear more as *titles* than intertitles, and carry much of the same influence over the story. They apportion each chapter with an additional microtale, lower in standing, but often more relevant. It is useful to think of them as contextual divisions that allow for intertextual – and intratextual – play. We have already encountered the intertitles of *Helena* when analysing Waugh's table of contents. Let us look here at a few more examples from the list. Waugh allocates Chapter Six the intertitle 'Ancien Régime', in which the political stability of the early fourth century, earned in part through Diocletian's reforms, gives way to the power politics that led to the rise of Constantine. The intertitle anticipates the abolition of one political structure in favour of another. At the same time, it captures a sense of Waugh's humour – readers familiar with the French Revolution cannot help but notice the irony in applying 'Ancien Régime' to an era that saw the reaffirmation of dynastic rule in the person of Constantine. The chapter goes on to explore Helena's interest in Christianity, and so the intertitle could equally refer to how traditional Roman religion would soon be dispensed with in favour of a monotheistic system of belief. The final chapter in Waugh's novel is entitled 'Ellen's Invention', and can be read as a riposte to a story Waugh relates in the preface. He claims that "a lady prominent for her hostility to the Church" had discovered, on returning from the Holy Land, that the story of the Crucifixion was a sham when she misidentified St Helena as Ellen, and the Invention of the Cross as a fiction rather than a feast.[848] The final intertitle performs an empirical reassessment of this brand of scepticism; in the chapter, Helena makes her "blunt assertion," discovering the True Cross and providing "Hope."[849] The intertitle highlights the centrality of Helena's discovery to Waugh's narrative, especially the historical truth it lends the Christian faith. This is historical revisionism in action, Christianising in context, and demonstrates Waugh's motive for writing the novel. Headings such as these ask readers "to take a confrontational stand toward the text," to challenge (or accept) the status quo the author draws attention to.[850]

Ford's *The Dragon Waiting* presents a similar example. Here, the reader encounters intertitles such as 'Transitions,' 'Transgressions,' and 'Transformations,' which provide a suitable meta-commentary on the novel's provision of alternative history. They draw attention to the metamorphic potential of magic in the novel, which helps alter the course of the Wars of the Roses,

[847] Genette: 1997, 306.
[848] Waugh: 1984, 9.
[849] Ibid., 159.
[850] Maiorino: 2008, 55.

enabling Richard III to win the Battle of Bosworth Field, as well as the metamorphic representation the reader is reading, which enacts a complete historical change by imagining a 'pagan' Medieval Europe (made possible by Julian's survival in Persia). Meanwhile, Spector's *Who Killed Apollo and Julian Augustus?* offers 'Freedom of Religion,' 'Real Reform,' and 'Intellectual Growth' to remember Julian by. They are ideological standpoints that further the novel's critique of Christianity, demonstrating how different things were with Julian, and what the world could have been like if the Christian plot against him had failed. Contextual divisions ask the reader to challenge what they know about a historical figure or event, and allow authors the chance to offer alternatives.

Intertitles are intratextual framings because they manage "the flow of words 'within' (*intra*) the text."[851] But they are also paratextual, because they "attempt to police proper interpretations, insisting on how they would like us to read the text."[852] Whether they divide the story numerically, topographically, chronographically, onomastically, or contextually, intertitles emplot the past according to historical themes and ultimately present a wider context for imagining antiquity.[853] Underpinning the need for these divisions is a desire for cultural and historical signposts to make the past navigable, allowing as many readers as possible to recognise the signs and reach the proposed destination. Genette argued that intertitles "presume familiarity with everything that has preceded [in the novel];" in this case it might be more accurate to say that intertitles rely on reader familiarity with the past *as it has been represented*.[854] If, as Drucker puts it "the act and circumstances of the telling become foundational to the events that constitute the told," then intertitles do more than structure the story.[855] In becoming signposts, they populate the historical imagination, directing the reader's attention and governing their movements across time and space. While the title names journey's end, intertitles determine how readers reach that goal, along with what they internalise on the way, making them essential reference points in the fluid structure of history.

[851] MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 4; see also Wolf: 1999, 109.
[852] Gray: 2010, 79.
[853] See Gray: 2010, 131: "as much as intertextuality and paratextuality are about framing and the prefiguration of textuality, they are also about, and are motored by, fans' (and others') desires for certain texts to stay alive continuously, reflected off, informing, and inspiring all manner of other texts."
[854] Genette: 1997, 294.
[855] Drucker: 2008, 138.

§8 Footnotes

"If the text should actually prove to be absorbing, ordinary footnotes afford no pleasure whatever. Encountering one, as Noel Coward remarked, is like going downstairs to answer the doorbell while making love."[856]

– Glen Bowersock

Out of the sixteen works in my case study, only one includes footnotes: Slaughter's *Constantine: The Miracle of the Flaming Cross*. The footnotes in this novel are short and to the point. For example, halfway through the narrative we see Constantine riding triumphantly across Britain, celebrated as 'Augustus' by those who supported his late father. When he reaches the south west, we are told that Constantine "rode through the lake country ... Not far from Aquae Sulis."[857] After "Aquae Sulis," there is an asterisk that signals the presence of a footnote, and at the bottom of the page we learn Aquae Sulis refers to the city of "Bath." On the same page, Constantine is told of an old Christian church in the area founded by Joseph of Arimathea. A second asterisk follows the story, and its accompanying footnote tells the reader that this church was located at "Glastonbury." The first footnote translates a Latinised place name, while the second supplies a modern geographical location to support a legendary story. Both work to supplement the narrative by coordinating the representation of Constantine's world with space as it exists today. What is different here is that rather than the story being supplanted by historical framings, the historical contents of the story (its Latin place names and legends) are supplemented by information that makes the history meaningful to a present-day audience. In the process, these footnotes offer the reader a glimpse 'behind the scenes' at Slaughter's reconstruction of the empire in late antiquity. This, the footnotes seem to say, is what is required to translate the past, a momentary digression that attempts to balance the story's obligations, its faithful recreation of places Constantine would have known, with the need to provide an educational breakdown for the (un)initiated reader.

Slaughter's footnotes thus symbolise research, professionalism, and elaboration in historical discourse, all the hallmarks that have come to be associated with footnotes.[858] Having said that, these footnotes are unusual in their brevity, and contribute little to Slaughter's lengthy biopic. They are a far cry from the "deep root systems" associated with footnotes, and, as the exception to the norm, it is worth briefly exploring why the majority of novelists do not make use of these "instrument[s] of power" to broker their use of fiction to represent the past.[859]

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[856] Bowersock: 1983, 54; Genette: 1997, 292-3 once wrote that "I see only one other literary practice that has the capacity to outdo the preface in those various extremes of literariness. That one is, obviously, the practice of writing *about* the preface" - perhaps he had not considered the possibilities, or indeed the probabilities, of scholars writing about footnotes, or footnoting their thoughts about footnotes, see Wright: 2017, 24.
[857] Slaughter: 1965, 208; similar examples can be found on page 188.
[858] Grafton: 1997, 9.
[859] Bowersock: 1983, 54-58; see also Grafton: 1997, 101.

Let us start by considering the use of footnotes in literature, and how their absence in historical fiction represents a break from both a longstanding historical tradition, and that of the early historical novel.[860] In terms of the former, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is exemplary, not merely because of its extensive footnotes, but because it dealt so extensively with late antiquity, contributing a pervasive myth.[861] Gibbon wrote that "many experiments were made before I could hit the middle tone between a dull chronicle and a rhetorical declamation," before he found a means to depict the "most awful *scene* in the history of mankind."[862] This scenic image was presented to his audience as the correct one, authorised by his erudition and fearsome knowledge of his subject, apparent not only in the text, but also the footnotes, which offered ample pages of source material and data presented with aplomb.[863] Gibbon showed through his footnotes that he was "true to the historian's first duty: to get his facts right."[864] Gibbon's footnotes, while more polarising than we might expect today, established the device as the mouthpiece for the historian's voice and showed how historians engaged in "conversations" with their predecessors and subjects.[865] In a number of cutting asides and appraisals, Gibbon's footnotes pointed the way for future scholars to engage with the evidence and the question of how we *know* the past.[866] There is, of course, the possibility that historical novelists recreating late antiquity, who often cite Gibbon as an influence, do not include footnotes because they wish to sidestep Gibbon's model, the way he assessed the "reliability of source material in front of the reader's eyes," and "presented history as a matter for study," one that established a link between his times, and the fall of Rome.[867] But the omission of footnotes runs deeper than this, representing, in addition to the above, a significant diversion from Walter Scott, who made liberal use of footnotes in his historical romances, replicating the style of eighteenth century historical literature.[868] While the content of Scott's footnotes differed from Gibbon's in the sense that they were there to show what aspects of his work could be deemed historical, they retained a playful, antagonistic relationship to the story, allowing for irony and self-depreciation.[869] The fact that writers have adopted every other paratextual supplement from Scott except footnotes points to a discomfort with their use and function in the novel.

Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century, historical novelists moved away from footnotes, gravitating instead towards prefaces and historical notes, content for documentary

[860] Garritzen: 2012, 418.
[861] See Theodore: 2016.
[862] Gibbon quoted in Lentin and Norman: 1998, viii-xi.
[863] Grafton: 1997, 2-3.
[864] Lentin and Norman: 1998, x; Bowersock: 1983, 54-58.
[865] Grafton: 1997, 234.
[866] Hutcheon: 1989, 92.
[867] Cosgrove: 1991, 151; Phillips: 2013, 94; see also Bowersock: 1983, 58.
[868] See Freedgood: 2010, 401 and Adams: 2015, 956-957.
[869] See Jackson-Houlston: 2008.

material to remain separate from the story's page-to-page activities. Footnotes, as Bowersock aptly put it, interrupt the narrative. Worse, as Gibbon and Scott show, the deep rootedness of footnotes is a masquerade, concealing the "constructive and combative activity" of the device.[870] Inhabiting extradiegetic space, they are poised to oppose the story.[871] This has proven popular in postmodernist writing, which uses footnotes – the very method of guaranteeing the veracity of an argument – to subvert grand narratives, challenge sources, and question historical representation.[872] Mainstream fiction is less interested in these themes, requiring instead that its audience engage in the reality of the story, signalled by its paratexts.[873] Rather than risk rupturing the narrative fabric, and for the sake of continuity, authors have offloaded their thoughts regarding the indeterminacy of their historical content to the start and/or the end of the book.[874] The dialogue that footnotes enabled has been repurposed and repositioned as a preliminary and/or closing frame. We have already seen how authors use prefaces to comment on the factuality of their account, as well as how they allow fiction to permeate the metareferential messages of the preface.[875] In the following chapter, we will look at historical notes. While only one novel in my case study contains footnotes, over half possess historical notes after the story. These notes similarly straddle the inside and outside of a work, able to provide references and observations, engage in historiography, and preoccupy the reader with metareferential commentary. They contain the *potential* of footnotes, but their position is determined by the fact that novels have to be marketable as immersive stories. In order for historical fiction to be sold as authentic historical fiction, it has to dispense with one of the most iconic signs associated with historical writing. The position of notes in historical fiction demonstrates a transitional trend in the genre away from historiography *in order to maintain realism*, whether in the form of 'found' letters, or simple third person narration.[876]

[870] Grafton: 1997, 9.
[871] Freedgood: 2010, 399; see also Cosgrove: 1991, 148.
[872] I'm thinking of José Carlos Somoza's *The Athenian Murders*, John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, as well as Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* and David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*; for more on postmodernism, historical fiction, and the paratexts of history, see Hutcheon: 1989, 83-84.
[873] Freedgood: 2010, 399-405.
[874] See, for example, Bradley and Paxson: 2011, xi-xiii and Baxter: 2007, iii.
[875] Grafton: 1997, 4-5.
[876] There are exceptions to this, such as *I, Claudius*: see Bennett: 2015, 29-31.

Chapter 3

Breaking the Frame, and Beyond

We move now to consider closing frames and what they add to our discussion of the interface at the heart of the historical frame. This chapter will quote from the public-facing side, but its focus is on what the non-public-facing side might do with this material. We are interested in the reader's exit strategy, the way they might reframe the story and their experience of history, and in particular the opportunity for frame-breaking, the collapsing of the triangulation of reader, past, and its representation enabled by the reader's successful navigation of the story and withdrawal into the historical frame.

§1 Historical Notes and Reviews

"In history, whenever a man finds himself facing different alternatives, he opts for one, eliminating the others for ever; not so in the ambiguous time of art, which resembles that of hope and oblivion. Hamlet, in this literary time, is both sane and mad. In the darkness of the Tower of Hunger Ugolino devours and does not devour the bodies of his beloved children."[877]

– Jorge Luis Borges

During the opening sequence of Woody Allen's 1985 film *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, the heroine, Cecilia, looks on with deep existential longing at a film poster for a black-and-white movie about a wealthy Manhattan playwright. In the background we hear Fred Astaire's *Cheek to Cheek*: 'Heaven, I'm in Heaven.' Just as we catch a close-up of Cecilia's face, a metal letter from the cinema's facade nearly catches her before clattering to the ground, shattering her – and our – reverie. A reminder of 'reality', the letter functions as a warning to Cecelia (and us) of the dangers of immersion, what might happen if one loses oneself in a story. The letter, however, could also be interpreted another way, its presence a violation of Cecelia's fantasy. It drops as if from another world, a reality she – in her yearning – has temporarily transcended. The falling letter, and abrupt moment of dislocation it causes, thus foreshadows the movie's premise. Cecilia, a downbeat 1930s wife who has recently been let go at work, elects to escape her impoverished life by re-watching *The Purple Rose of Cairo* enough times to fall in love with the explorer character, Tom Baxter. Nothing unusual there, at least until Tom turns and spots Cecilia in the audience, speaks to her, and promptly walks off screen into the 'real world' so as to declare his love for her, terrifying the audience in the process.

The reader may well wonder what relevance this striking case of frame-breaking has to the textual world of historical fictions, since they are not well-known for playing with the border between possible worlds.[878] As we have seen, the producers of the public-facing side of the historical frame devote considerable resources to transmitting ideas of history and framing the story as historically authentic, enhancing the realist aesthetic of the representation and its immersive capabilities. Pronouncements of fiction, meanwhile, in the preface and contents, and those activated by book placement and covers, signal the text's ethical engagement with the past, its honesty, as

[877] Borges: 1999, 279.
[878] An exception would be Somoza's 2003 novel *The Athenian Murders*.

well as its difference to other forms of historical writing and truth.[879] What I want to look at is how this mode of reading (fiction framed historically) is brought to a head. I believe there exists, in historical notes and back cover reviews, a most invasive case of frame-breaking, which, while not as ostentatious as the example from *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, explains how the narratives of closing frames 'step' into the novel's pre-framed contents, and vice versa, reducing the triangle established between reader, past, and its representation into a single, seemingly direct line.

Historical notes have the capacity to rework an understanding of the story; they give the reader permission to reconceptualise the past according to the story just read.[880] In the process, they open up a channel between what have become distinct worlds, as we saw at the end of Chapter 1. That is, the represented story (a fictional work with historical contents framed historically), and what actually happened (provided by notes). This section attempts to understand how the "multiple vying types of pastness" that make up the historical imagination not only co-exist, but, due to the placement of notes and reviews, continually feed into each other, enabling 'conversation' with the possibilities raised by the 'forking paths' of historical reconstruction.[881] Each time a story intrudes on history, it supplements the past, expanding the horizon of imagination.[882] At the same time, the bleeding of narrative history into popular stories enhances immersion. This has a pronounced impact on the historical imagination, legitimising the sensation of being able to relive the past through the thoughts and actions of represented figures.[883] To explore this phenomenon, I have divided my analysis in two parts. The first deals with the theory of frame-breaking and how it challenges the way we think about historical fiction. The second puts this theory into practice by looking at the historical notes and reviews in *Emperor* (Thubron) and *Gods and Legions* (Michael Ford).

Theory

"We are at any moment characters within many frames, our own and others, frames of memory and of imagination, that again and again impinge metaleptically on each other."[884]

– Duncan Kennedy

The technical term for frame-breaking is 'metalepsis'. Prior to being coined by Genette, metalepsis signified a transition in rhetoric or grammar, as defined by Quintilian.[885] Genette fleshed out his

[879] Groot: 2016, 42.
[880] Grace: 1998, 483; if the paratexts of historical novels have received only limited attention, notes and reviews have barely been considered; Groot: 2010, 221-222 for example discusses reviews only briefly, but does not treat them as part of the paratextual frame of the genre, while in 2016, 31 and 42 he considers notes only in terms of their ethics.
[881] Groot: 2009, 249; see Borges: 2000, *The Garden of Forking Paths*.
[882] Groot: 2010, 49.
[883] Ibid.; see also Groot: 2009, 181 and Kennedy and O'Gorman: 2015, 52.
[884] Kennedy: (forthcoming), 22.
[885] Nelles: 1992, 93.

redefinition of metalepsis in *Narrative Discourse* as: "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe), or the inverse."[886] In *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, Genette provided further clarification, citing metalepsis as the "deliberate transgression of the threshold of embedding ... when an author (or his reader) introduces himself into the fictive action of the narrative or when a character in that fiction intrudes into the extradiegetic existence of the author or reader."[887] Since then, metalepsis has been used to explain frame-breaking in everything from the Bible to musical theatre and comics.[888] The scope and applicability of the term has led scholars to expand and refine the concept. Marie-Laure Ryan analysed its etymology, noting that metalepsis is "composed of two Greek roots: the prefix *meta*, 'what is above or encompasses,' and a suffix from the verb *lambanein*, 'to grab.'"[889] From this, she describes metalepsis as a "grabbing gesture that reaches across levels and ignores boundaries, bringing to the bottom what belongs to the top or vice versa."[890] Other definitions have focused on how metalepsis undoes "stable levels and definite boundaries," or on how it occurs "when the ostensible boundary between two narrative worlds is breached."[891] It has been used to explain the existence of a "'strange loop' in the structure of narrative" as well as the presence of a "'short circuit' between the 'fictional world and the ontological level [of] the author'."[892]

More recent developments include the use of possible-worlds theory, the shedding of structuralist taxonomies, and a transmedial focus.[893] Rather than thinking of metalepsis as a violation of narrative levels, we should think of it transgressing the border between ontologically distinct worlds, corrupting their logic in the process.[894] This is the basis of Werner Wolf's redefinition of metalepsis as "a usually intentional paradoxical transgression of, or confusion between, (onto-)logically distinct (sub)worlds and/or levels that exist, or are referred to, within representations of possible worlds."[895] Wolf believes it is possible to apply the term across media to enhance our understanding of the phenomenon through cross-disciplinary analysis.[896] In the same vein, Thoss has focused on how metalepsis violates the border separating "the inside from the outside of a

[886] Genette: 1980, 234-235.
[887] Genette: 1988, 88.
[888] See Eisen and Möllendorff: 2013, Kukkonen and Klimek: 2011, and Thoss: 2015.
[889] Ryan: 2006, 206.
[890] Ibid.
[891] Malina: 2002, 132; Harpold: 2008, 99.
[892] Pier: 2016, 2, quoting McHale: 1987, 119 and 213.
[893] Kukkonen: 2011, 1; Bell and Alber: 2012, 169.
[894] Thoss: 2015, 9-10.
[895] Wolf: 2003, 91.
[896] Ibid., 101.

storyworld," in different media.[897] We will return to this. For now, it is enough to say that metalepsis "destabilizes, however provisionally, the distinction between reality and fiction."[898]

Metalepsis has found fertile ground in the creative arts throughout history, with examples ranging from ancient Greek epic to the novels of Cervantes and Sterne, the plays of Pirandello, and the films of Woody Allen and Mel Brooks.[899] In all that time, it has rarely occurred in fictional or non-fictional history.[900] These modes of presentation are simply not conducive to frame-breaking that challenges the very nature of reality and representation, drawing attention to the "porosity of ... boundaries" between worlds.[901] That being said, one of the reasons why historical fiction has perhaps been overlooked is that the focus tends to be on the story, not the framing narratives that in this case represent an ontologically distinct world (history) wrapped around a fictional world (the story).[902] If we look instead to the *framings* of historical fiction, where the fictional and/or historical nature of the story is regulated, then it becomes clear that, from the earliest historical novels, authors have been blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction in much the same way as novelists who breach those same frontiers with metaleptic intrusions in the story.

Walter Scott's inclusion of self-conscious paratexts fulfilled the first requirement of metalepsis – the presence of two or more distinct worlds; that of the certified author-historian and the fictional storyworld.[903] The latter, according to Ronen, "is not a modal extension of the actual world, but rather a world with its own modal structure," which belongs "to an ontic sphere different from any historical narrative about the period."[904] No matter how it is framed, the fictional world evoked by the story is at best a "counterpart" to our own, an alternative state of affairs.[905] Alongside this, Scott placed his historical notes, those that pertained to how things actually were, allowing them to function as a "bridge" between this extratextual context and the world of the fiction.[906] Thoss notes that "metaleptic transgressions between a storyworld and reality occur when a medium claims that there is continuity between its storyworld and our world."[907] In Scott's case, the historical

[897] Thoss: 2015, 177.
[898] Turk: 2011, 83.
[899] For the former, see Jong: 2011, 8; see also Malina: 2002, 1, Fludernik: 2003, 392, and Pier: 2011, 268; *Don Quixote* and *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* are the examples by Cervantes and Sterne, while *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is Pirandello's contribution; *Blazing Saddles* and *Space Balls* are two examples of Brooks' metaleptic films, while we have already encountered Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo*; Allen also wrote metaleptic fiction in his short story collection *Side Effects* (1981).
[900] Wolf: 2003, 100-101; an exception to this might be the use of time-travel in Hopkins: 1999, and self-aware historical fiction, such as that written by John Fowles and José Carlos Somoza.
[901] Pier: 2016, 15.
[902] The one exception is Freedgood: 2010, who briefly analyses the effects of metalepsis in Scott's footnotes.
[903] Thoss: 2015, 24-25; Wolf: 2009, 51; Klimek: 2009, 170.
[904] Ronen: 1994, 87-88.
[905] See Bell and Alber: 2012, 172.
[906] Wolf: 2006, 30; Malina: 2002, 2.
[907] Thoss: 2015, 28.

note performed precisely this function, connecting his dense and richly described historical romances with the facts of the past as they were understood. Scott wrote in the preface to *Peveril of the Peak* that the reader, "having been interested in fictitious adventures, ascribed to an historical period and characters ... begins next to be anxious to learn what the facts really were, and how far the novelist has justly represented them."[908] In providing this and allowing for a "dialogue with the 'real' account of history," Scott established a threshold that enabled his fiction to have "a point of entry" into historical discourse via the same notational paratexts that were being developed to "strengthen the boundaries between scholarly and popular histories."[909]

Scott's intentions may well have been to educate, but his readers prove that the dialogue worked both ways. According to Rigney, Scott's work led to a "crossover between fiction and reality," with the erection of real-life gravestones in honour of characters from his novels (inspired by real figures) demonstrating that historical fiction "can influence our memory of what [is] real."[910] The framing potential of Scott's notes thus did more than draw attention to the historical facts that inspired the storyworld, they helped to "unsettle the distinction" between the two, leading to fears that the genre might "corrupt historical knowledge."[911] This unsettling did not, however, mean that readers were categorically unable to distinguish the invented from the historical; rather, it shows that by claiming to be "both fiction and history," the historical novel advanced a means by which readers could have things both ways, a trope usually reserved for Borges' ambiguous time of art.[912] The purpose of this chapter is to explore how the paratextual devices that come after the story help to negotiate this pairing at the close of a reading, starting with notes and reviews.

To analyse metalepsis in historical fiction, I will draw on the metaphor of film. Film allows us to visualise metalepsis in literature, and to develop a model for what transpires when readers finish a historical novel. Let us take the example of *Drunk History*, an American TV series in which an intoxicated comedian offers a historical narrative while famous actresses and actors represent – and lip-sync – that narration on screen. In an early episode on the life of Frederick Douglass, a social reformer and contemporary of Abraham Lincoln, there are three narratologically interesting moments. The first is an ascending metalepsis that consists of Will Ferrell (Abraham Lincoln) and Don Cheadle (Frederick Douglass) demonstrating awareness of the narrative they are a part of, glancing towards the ceiling as the narrator fumbles her lines. Shortly after, we see an example of a descending metalepsis. When the narrator cannot recall Douglass' name, she calls him Richard

[908] From the 'Prefatory Letter' to Scott's 1823 novel, *Perveril of the Peak*; see also Kerr: 1989, 14-17.
[909] Groot: 2016, 219; Pier: 2011, 275; Garritzen: 2012, 421 and Duncan: 2003, 96.
[910] Rigney: 2001, 14-16.
[911] Frow quoted in MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 16; Wesseling: 1991, 42.
[912] Rigney: 2001, 9; Freedgood: 2010, 401.

Dreyfuss; the contemporary American actor's photograph then appears, cut between the narrative. The third moment consists of a blunder that leads to a second ascending metalepsis. As soon as the narrator claims that Douglass "remained an advisor to President Clinton," both Ferrell and Cheadle turn to look at the camera, alarmed at the historical inaccuracy.[913] *Drunk History* playfully inverts our expectations of the genre by allowing its characters to be aware of the discourse they are part of, as well as the historical facts beyond their own representation. It is the characters, who, with their impossible knowledge of the narrator's mistakes, supplant her through their self-aware address to the viewer, highlighting the comedic docudrama's latent preoccupation with historical authenticity. The sudden appearance of Richard Dreyfuss' photograph, meanwhile, signals a metaleptic intrusion from above. The image descends to becomes part of the narrative, a presence that cannot easily be explained away, one that shows (in real time) the way fiction can supplement the historical record. Metalepsis in *Drunk History* demonstrates that the device has the potential to reframe an encounter with the past. The show's comic inversions encourage its viewers to reflect on the moment when a fictional representation of the past gives way to a deeper, more complex way of conceiving history, when representations of the past collide with 'what actually happened'.

Historical notes in fiction provide a similar example of dislocation. The effect of reading the notes at the end of a historical novel is akin to the falling letter in Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo*. When the reader reads the historical note, they are abruptly reminded of the historical weight behind the story. While Wolf has argued that initial framings "govern understanding in a more fundamental way than internal or closing framings," I argue that the end clarifies how the novel should be remembered.[914] The end is there to make sense of what readers have experienced, and its paratexts clarify the limits of art both practically, through book covers and rolling credits, and paradigmatically.[915] Frank Kermode once said about literature that "an end will bestow upon the whole duration and meaning."[916] 'The end', however, is not easy to mark in historical fiction**.** Closing frames exist in the spaces between the end of the story and the book itself, with notes, references, and bibliographies identifying the genre as "different to the novel in general," suggesting it should be read in the manner of history.[917] Let us focus first on the historical note. I argued at the end of the last chapter that this device is most closely related to the footnote in its function: both work to "buttress and undermine, at one and the same time."[918] As Derrida argued, "the very subordination of the footnote assures a sort of framing, a delimitation in the space that gives it a paradoxical

[913] Waters and Konner: 2010, Episode 5.
[914] Wolf: 2006, 296-297; Wolf: 1999, 106 and 111; Genette: 1997, 238-239 makes a similar point.
[915] Spiridon: 2010, 54-58.
[916] Kermode: 1966, 46; see also Spiridon: 2010, 54.
[917] Groot: 2009, 217-218; see also Groot: 2010, 63, Stevens: 2013, 26-27, and Abbott: 2008, 30.
[918] Grafton: 1997, 31; Freedgood: 2010, 399.

independence, a freedom, an autonomy."[919] This allows it to "stand outside the literary text" and pass "judgement over it."[920] The historical note is "the last word," on the story, providing "closure and [a] sense of validity" to its interpretation of the past.[921] Historical notes supplement the story by drawing on narrative history (and its use of supplementary footnotes for fact-checking) to flesh out 'what really happened'.[922] The historical note thus unavoidably connects the storyworld to a form of writing that has traditionally provided factual information about the past.[923] As a result of this contact, the storyworld comes away *changed*, much as it did in *Drunk History*. Derrida highlighted this transformation when he argued that "the problematic limit between an inside and an outside ... is always threatened by graft and by parasite."[924] The historical note is grafted onto the storyworld, which affects the internal ordering and presumed function of both. On a conceptual level, this impacts what idea of history the reader takes away. While the note supplements the storyworld as shown above, the same thing happens in reverse, with the storyworld supplementing the historical world of the note. The pairing of the storyworld with the historical note appears to suggest that history (as both mode and object of study) is incomplete, and can only be completed thanks to the affordances of fiction. We will see below how this can be imagined as a Möbius strip.[925]

I mentioned earlier that Thoss considers metalepsis a "violation of the border that separates the inside from the outside of a storyworld."[926] What happens at the end of a historical novel is a moment of frame-breaking that opens two windows. The first is between the story and historical note. Once opened and transgressed, the storyworld appears inextricably folded into the world of the note, making it difficult to differentiate the two. The second is between the historical fiction and the reader, and is strengthened in part by reviews. Now, this type of metalepsis is considered impossible.[927] No metalepsis in any medium has the power to actually infringe on reality – they can only infringe on reality as represented in an artefact. However, this does not take into account the influence historical fiction exerts over the historical imagination. Not only does metalepsis break down boundaries within a piece of historical fiction, but as the reader approaches the end, what happens is a leap *beyond* the book – from storyworld and historical narration into imaginative conceptions of the past. In other words, there are two 'storyworld-reality' metalepses in effect at

[919] Derrida: 1991, 194.
[920] Cosgrove: 1991, 139.
[921] Dworkin: 2005, 13; Barbara Herrnstein Smith quoted in Nelles: 1992, 90; see also Abbott: 2008, 56-64.
[922] Hutcheon: 1988, 122-123 and Hutcheon: 1989, 84.
[923] Hutcheon: 1989, 86.
[924] Derrida: 1991, 196.
[925] Pier: 2016, 11.
[926] Thoss: 2015, 177, 24.
[927] Klimek: 2011, 26 insists this is impossible, but her analysis does not account for the fact that historical fiction relates both to an alternative possible world, *and* our understanding of the actual past, not just its representation; see also Ryan: 2006, 209, who notes that the 'reality' affected most by metalepsis is reality as it is represented, not reality as we experience it, and Thoss: 2015, who ratifies this point.

the close of a historical novel.[928] The first is between the storyworld and narrative history as evoked in the note. The second occurs between the storyworld and reality beyond the book, since it is here that readers maintain the historical imagination, the collective vision of history.

Practice

"Factual truth sells, and audiences will forgive failures of art and even lapses of narrative suspense in the delivery of this kind of truth."[929]

– H. Porter Abbott

In the preface to *Emperor*, Colin Thubron writes: "This book is not a historical inquiry. Of Constantine too little is known to ascertain so ambiguous a character as I have indicated ... Rather I have attempted to explore regions on which history is silent."[930] This introduction demonstrates a preoccupation with filling the gaps left by the historical record, a chance for the author to describe "their sense of responsibility to the past" and how they will "articulate something fictive out of source material that cleaves to a kind of truth."[931] On the penultimate page of the novel, the *Praetorian Prefect* Tetricus shares his interpretation of the Emperor Constantine's infamous conversion in an interview. "You ask for my opinion, Secretary. It is this: I believe that Constantine did not have a vision of light. No. *He had a vision of darkness and chaos*. He saw a universe without order, or God, or any meaning at all ... unable to endure what he had seen, [he] spread the Christian cross over that unthinkable abyss ... He no longer wishes to inquire into anything."[932] The final page then tells how Constantine defeated his rival Maxentius and was baptised on his deathbed. It is claimed that "within his lifetime the cross of his vision triumphed, and Christianity became as it remains today: the pre-eminent religion of the Western world."[933] This is the novel's historical note, though it appears unlabelled. There is very little to differentiate the note from the prior page other than a shift in point of view. What stands out most is the italic typeface, and it is this visual clue that signifies the metaleptic shift as the reader moves from the storyworld to the historical world represented by the note's framing narrative, as if it were a continuation of the story. The note "creates a transition between text and context by pointing to a space beyond itself."[934] It supplements the story by showing the reader just how historically important the events narrated in the story were, at least in terms of Christianity today. Much like cartography, these notes allow the

[928] Storyworld-reality metalepsis is one of three metaleptic prototypes put forward by Thoss (2015, 9-10, 18-20, and 23-24); it is, I believe, the most useful way to analyse what happens at the end of a historical novel.
[929] Abbott: 2008, 145.
[930] Thubron: 1991, vii; this announces a deviation from historical writing, as conceived since Herodotus.
[931] Groot: 2016, 31, see also Groot: 2010, 113 and Kennedy and O'Gorman: 2015, 54.
[932] Thubron: 1991, 166.
[933] Ibid., 167.
[934] Wolf: 1999, 120.

reader to consider the wider implications of the story's historical contents.[935] Thubron's claim to give voice to the silent pages of history is augmented by the note's future-focused framings, which justify populating the historical landscape with images taken from the story.

The historical note implicitly confers with the reader in the same way as Lincoln and Douglass in *Drunk History*. In the process of clarifying what happened next, the historical note opens a window on the closure and limits of the story. The note, which represents the ontologically distinct world of narrative history, reaches back across the storyworld-boundary, reframing Tetricus' speculation by providing context and relating it to historical time. The window thus opened is then violated – *and kept open* – by the revelation of Constantine's thoroughly un-Christian state of mind at the moment of his 'conversion', which seeps into the world of the historical note, inevitably carried through by the reader. The note acts as a final scene, leading to the "mutual contamination" of both narrative history and Tetricus' historically-framed conjecture.[936] Like the intrusion of Richard Dreyfuss in *Drunk History*, such a contamination lingers in the imagination (especially because in this instance, Tetricus' comments appear to undermine the truth-value of Christianity) and cannot easily be excised from the record. Wolf makes use of the Möbius strip to portray a combined ascending and descending metalepsis.[937] I would like to expand Wolf's metaphor to further elaborate on what happens in the historical imagination when readers encounter notes.

Let us imagine that reading historical fiction equates to walking along the side of the triangle that connects the reader to the represented past, some distance from what is known about the past, which the historical frame holds at a distance.[938] On encountering the historical note, the reader's journey is abruptly diverted by a twist in the path that shortcuts to narrative history, reducing the triangular relationship to a looped circuit. Paratexts that explicitly describe what actually happened, such as the historical note, allow the critic to reflect on this twist.[939] The 'strange loop' in historical novels that connects storyworld to historical note can be thought of as a Möbius strip. In our thought experiment, the Möbius strip enables the novel's path to wind around and take the reader through a world with different historical rules, before looping back to the story, collapsing the points on the triangle into a shared traversable surface. This journey alters the historical contents of the story (now understood in its wider context), as well as the ideas of history its framing devices have

[935] This has long been a part of historical writing since antiquity, which was often interested in the outcome of events; see Lucian, *How to Write History*, 49 and Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, 3.1-5.
[936] Ryan: 2006, 207; as Wolf: 2006, 321 argues in relation to metalepsis in frame stories: "One of the principle functions of all framing sections of frame stories, namely the signalling of the ontological status of the embedded texts, gets thereby confused, since the embedded novel, which is overtly classified as fiction in the framing, 'impossibly' seems to spill over onto the story's framing 'reality'."
[937] Wolf quoted in Klimek: 2011, 33; for more on 'strange loops' and 'short circuits', see McHale: 1987, 119.
[938] See Wolf: 2013, 120-121.
[939] Wolf: 2003, 103.

put forward, thanks to the supplementary effect of the note. Rather than breaking the illusion of fiction, as metalepsis often does, here it can evoke pleasure, with the story acting as intermediary for the reader to 'converse' with another level of history inside the fabric of the work.[940] This experience is then given permanence due to the note's authorising turn.

Thubron's historically framed story of Constantine's mental state before his 'conversion' becomes historically informed thanks to the contiguity of the story with the historical note. The novel's speculation regarding Constantine's 'conversion', which ranges from heat-stroke (Constantine's servant), a divine miracle (Bishop Hosius), to a desperate need to find order in a chaotic, meaningless world (Tetricus), passes through the historical note.[941] In the process, it is not only legitimised, but also adds complexity to the note, perhaps explaining why Constantine delayed his own baptism, a fact Thubron draws attention to.[942] The novel's spatial arrangement helps insert Thubron's ambiguous Constantine into the record, a reading that is then reinforced by the reviews on the back cover. Reviews chart an authorised set of receptions, with critics from the *Listener* claiming the novel is "no 'costume romance'", while the *Glasgow Herald* holds that *Emperor* "re-create[s] the very feel of late Imperial Italy."[943] What these reviews do is to retrace and validate the imaginative looping of the Möbius strip between the world of history, and the storyworld.[944] While Thubron's Constantine cannot literally step from his pages, he becomes a "contemporary," as the *Listener* notes. This reification of Constantine helps the reader imaginatively fill the historical gaps Thubron draws attention to. At the same time, the reader is assured of the benefits of *Emperor*, that the novel can indeed show them "into the Emperor's tormented soul."[945]

Ford's *Gods and Legions* includes both a historical note in the style of Thubron, and an author's note in the following pages. The historical note in *Gods and Legions* faces the final page of the story. It supplies additional information vital to an understanding of the wider historical context following the Emperor Julian's death, as depicted at the end of *Gods and Legions*. The note's framing narrative takes the reader beyond the end of the story, first by clarifying certain historical facts, then by connecting the novel's denouement to what happened next. In acting as an extension of the story, the note is simultaneously corrupted by that story. While the note says that "The Emperor Julian died at Maranga from a spear thrown by an unknown hand in the year 363," the reader learns

[940] Kukkonen and Klimek: 2011, 18 notes how metalepsis can have both anti-illusionist and illusionists effects; Fludernik: 2003, 392, "Metalepsis is not necessarily an anti-illusionistic device. Like metanarration ... it significantly enhances the realistic illusion in the realist novel"; see also Klimek: 2009.
[941] Thubron: 1991, 158-166.
[942] Ibid., 167.
[943] Ibid., rear cover.
[944] What I suggest here runs counter to Ryan: 2006, 208-9, when she argues that "the so-called reality that becomes affected by the events of a higher level is not the world in which the actual reader and author are located ... the world of ground zero, remains protected from metalepsis."
[945] *Sunday Telegraph* review on Thubron: 1991, rear cover.

in the story that it is the Christian physician and narrator, Caesarius, who fulfils "the bloody potential" of that spear by reneging on his oath and ensuring the fatality of the wound.[946] Ford positions Caesarius first as the emperor's friend, then as his enemy due to their religious differences. While the historical note does not authorise this story, it does not deny it either, allowing the text to become "an illustration of the gloss's ... argument."[947] The note paves the way for a metaleptic transgression between story and history by stating that although no one knows who threw the spear, the reader *knows* who fulfilled its function. As a result, readers might populate their imagination with assassins where there may have been none. The historical note is entitled 'Author's Postscript,' which only makes it harder to differentiate between story and historical narrative: is this history according to Ford, or accepted history? The confusion, intentional or otherwise, only increases reliance on Ford and the framings provided. The reader is invited to collude in Ford's version of history, both as it is depicted in the story, and in the note. There is no desire to fill gaps here; instead, readers are given the answer to a question. Ford connects his theory to historical narrative and, in the following pages, to source material, collapsing all worlds into one.

Ford's author's note follows on from the historical note, and offers the reader insight into the 'making of' *Gods and Legions*. As I have already shown, the inclusion of a self-conscious author's note is a tradition that dates back at least as far as Scott. Ford includes a total of four pages at the end of his novel, and within the first paragraph there is an example of metalepsis that demonstrates just how invasive the phenomenon can be. Ford says that "wherever possible, I made a point of including his [Julian's] own words in the dialogue of this novel."[948] This does a number of things. Firstly, it demonstrates the intertexts of history at work in the novel, certifying Ford as a 'serious' historical novelist interested in sources and the creative space they open up.[949] Secondly, it reverses Thucydides' claim to have "put invented orations into the mouths of real-life heroes," and instead transmits an idea of historical authenticity based on adherence to the extant record.[950] Thirdly, Ford enhances the historical currency of *Gods and Legions* by waiting until the end to reveal to the reader that they have been reading Julian's words all along.[951] What Ford's admission shows is the power of metalepsis to reframe the story and the reader's imaginative appreciation of history.

Ford's comment encourages the reader to reframe what has just been read by claiming it is not fiction, but contains Julian's writings. The story, meanwhile, with its emplotment and characterisation, bleeds into a reader's sense of Julian's writings, affecting their perception of what

[946] Ford: 2002, 447 and 441.
[947] Watson: 2012, 9.
[948] Ford: 2002, 449.
[949] Groot: 2010, 182.
[950] Phillips: 2013, 224.
[951] Thoss: 2015, 45.

they might contain, while at the same time fleshing out Ford's Julian through association with extant historical literature. This type of metalepsis can be clarified by reference to yet another famous case of metalepsis in film. In the movie *Pleasantville*, two high-school teens played by Toby Maguire and Reese Witherspoon jump into a black-and-white TV-show about a town called Pleasantville. There, they end up corrupting the ontology of the storyworld by introducing knowledge only available in the 'real' world. This is depicted visually in the film by the black-and-white world becoming colourful. Mid-way through the movie, the inhabitants of Pleasantville ask Maguire to tell them how novels end, since all books in Pleasantville are blank. As Maguire remembers the stories he has read, the blank pages fill in, exemplifying what happens historically to the story of *Gods and Legions*, as well as the reader's appreciation of Julian's writings in their imagination. Ford, rather than disentangling his fictitious version of Julian from the historical Julian (something that we saw happen in a number of contents pages), chooses instead to establish equivalence between them, helping to "project an image of history against another image that already exists, against an established background of facts."[952] In bringing this tripartite mesh together at the beginning and end of *Gods and Legions*, Ford, along with the reviewers who recommend his fiction, endorses the use of the novel in imagining how things actually were.[953] What the existence of historical notes and reviews show is that metalepsis leads to "a more complex model of reading."[954] Hybridity has been put forward to explain this in the past.[955] I contend, however, that what we see with notes and reviews is less a hybrid way of reading (a combination of two distinct elements) and more an interplay and negotiation between an already complex mode of reading (fiction framed historically) and a reference system whose placement enables a transference of information between ontologically distinct worlds (story and note). Not only do readers balance the novel's fictional and historical framings throughout, but they conclude by strengthening the connections made, supplementing their historical imagination with ideas from the novel.[956] And not just from the story, but also the framing narratives of paratexts. As these examples show, authors and publishers provide readers with densely layered framing narratives equivalent to stories within stories that, through metalepsis, and intentionally or not, appear to offer a direct means to 'converse' with antiquity.

Metalepsis in historical fiction asks us to think more broadly about the role of framing in historical fiction, and what happens when a historically-framed fiction bleeds into, and is further contaminated by, narrative history. It encourages us to "theorize the virtual," understood here as

[952] Wesseling: 1991, 169; Widmann: 2011, 188.
[953] Wake: 2016, 89.
[954] Nelles: 1992, 94; this runs counter to Lowenthal: 2015, 15.
[955] For the historical novel as hybrid, see Stevens: 2013, 20, Phillips: 2013, 224-225, Groot: 2010, 68, Rigney: 2001, 16 and 58, and Wesseling: 1991, vii.
[956] Groot: 2016, 193 and Bhadury: 2013, 316.

the historical imagination.[957] Recent studies of reading have pointed to how fiction "seeps into ... daily existence," shaping how readers think and perceive reality.[958] My focus on historical notes and reviews shows that the genre's framing apparatus, at the very moment it tries to separate the story from narrative history, in fact enables this type of seepage, both within the work, and beyond it. Malina has argued that metalepsis "affect[s] *our* construction as subjects," with the device in literature modelling the way that we continually frame and reframe ourselves and our world, along with those around us.[959] By establishing and undoing its own boundaries, the historical frame in fiction constructs readers who do not have to choose between one historical truth; instead, they can achieve an impossible duality as contradictory as the framings that form our identity.

[957] Herman: 1997, 132.
[958] See Lea: 2017.
[959] Malina: 2002, 9; see also Sommer: 2006, 404.

§2 Cartography Revisited

"They really believe that we wouldn't have to fly that mission tomorrow if someone would only tiptoe up to the map in the middle of the night and move the bomb line over Bologna."[960]
– Joseph Heller

In Chapter 2 we saw how maps in historical novels refer the reader to the Roman Empire using a complex geographical and temporal palimpsest that consists of a modern representation of space (Europe and the Near East) overlaid with signifiers that identify maps as reality portals to the past. We saw how maps foreshadow historical events and create narrative trajectory by emplotting the direction of the story onto the landscape, as well as how maps allow readers to alternate between distant and imminent perspectives. We also looked at how, in their homogenous representation of the empire, maps engender in the imagination a Rome that is taken for reality, while the historically mutable and oft-contested landscape of its empire disappears from view.

Maps, in their appearance as historical artefacts, fulfil expectations of empire, visually and cognitively. This section is interested in how the same paratext can achieve two different framing effects depending on when it is read and where it is placed in the novel. To investigate this, we will look at the map in Slaughter's *Constantine: The Miracle of the Flaming Cross* (Figure 17), found not only at the start of the novel, but also at the end, on the inside of the back cover. The appearance of Slaughter's map at the end of the novel helps to negotiate and reframe ideas of history as they develop following exposure to the historical contents of the story. In addition to this, we will take another look at the unidirectional line of Julian's Persian campaign as depicted in Vidal's *Julian*, Ford's *Gods and Legions*, and the performance notes to Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean* (Figures 18, 19 and 21). This is to show how maps, during a reading, are able to accommodate and transmit new perspectives on historical events, becoming "a multidimensional world, containing objects and even emotions not perceived directly on the piece of paper."[961]

Butterfield once said of the genre that, "We do the kind of thinking ... needed to turn a map into a picture," while Calvino wrote that "all the things contained in the city [of Eudoxia] are included in the [map]," drawn in by the spectator.[962] The reader is the one who imaginatively breathes life into the dots and dashes.[963] It is important to remember, however, that readers will make sense of maps differently at different points in the reading process. The maps in Slaughter's novel (Figure 17) are available both before, and after, a reading. They frame the story and act as a second cover, the empire superimposed behind the image of the emperor Constantine on the front

[960] Heller: 2011, 137.
[961] Muehrcke and Muehrcke: 1974, 323.
[962] Butterfield: 1924, 20; Calvino: 1997, 86.
[963] Muehrcke and Muehrcke: 1974, 319.

cover, and before the author's portrait, which appears on the back cover. These cartographic covers are identical. The interchangeability of the maps contributes to their status as immutable historical artefacts, a representation of Rome that exists beyond historical contingency. At the same time, the maps are drawn into the story at multiple points. The select use of place names on the map is not randomly generated, but congregates around Constantine's movements, particularly his military victories (in Britain and the Near East), and decision to hold ecumenical religious councils (Nicaea). The use of Latin place names used throughout the story, which we encountered when discussing footnotes in Chapter 2, also refer the reader to those same Latin names on the map. Meanwhile, the map's modern key (bottom left), which contextualises the distance and scale of the empire, measuring it in miles, may help the reader put into perspective (and transcribe) the distance Constantine travels when he flees the city of Nicomedia for the safety of his father's court in Britain, a distance Slaughter lists in Roman miles in the story.[964] These moments encourage the reader to read the story alongside the map in the style of narrative history. Their imaginative impact, however, pales when compared to an encounter with the second map after the story.

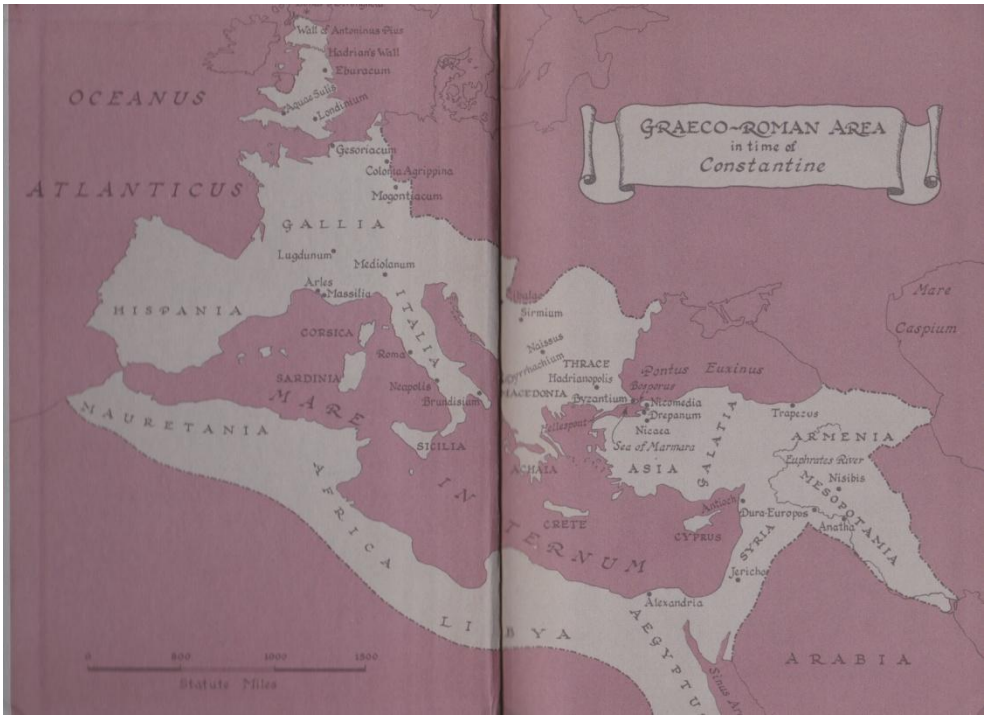

*Figure 17: Map from 'Constantine: The Miracle of the Flaming Cross' (*Slaughter 1968)

The doubling of the map is useful to think with as a visual prop that makes evident how maps frame and also reframe a reading. The power of maps lies in their associative powers; here is a fictional biography of the Emperor Constantine yoked to a comprehensive depiction of a unified empire that does not change. In their position, and in the way they provide an overall direction to history, they are universalising. I mean this both in Polybius' sense of the empire as an 'organic

[964] Slaughter: 1965, 182.

whole', and also in the way the maps enable readers to relate individual events in the story to the empire as a whole. At the same time, there is an interdependence in the second map between this idea of history, and the biographical or 'great man' history made apparent by the story and its title. In referring to the 'Graeco-Roman Area in time of Constantine', the second map, despite being a duplicate, identifies a different Rome to the one evoked by the first map. In finishing the story, the reader internalises Slaughter's biography of the emperor, up to his death. The second map thus represents the empire *after* Constantine had unified it, but *before* the empire was divided between his sons. Understood in this way, the map at the *start* of the novel is entirely inaccurate as an indication of the past-present state of the empire when Constantine was a child (divided by Diocletian after decades of instability), and instead acts as a general reference point, as well as foreshadowing events that *will* take place, offering a synoptic view of the places that will be important to Constantine.[965] Once the reader has read Slaughter's novel, they will become aware (if they were not already) that Constantine, despite his tumultuous rise to power, eventually ruled as sole emperor, and attempted to bring his people together under Christianity, a religion whose own internal strife he sought to settle, organising the first of the 'universal' councils.[966] The second map passes on these ideas of Constantine by making his military and administrative achievements apparent on the very object of study the historically-framed fiction claims to reconstruct, assigning him ownership of what the map represents (he is named in its title). This map leaves the reader with an afterimage of the empire (and its emperor), one projected and sustained following the close of the story. This lingering image is then repopulated by concepts and events drawn from the novel (just as the first map was originally populated by the reader's existing knowledge), and so the second map passes into memory, complete with associations formed during a reading.

The maps in Figures 18, 19 and 21 all belong to narratives of the emperor Julian, and signal a particular concern with historical events as they progressed in the East. All three maps are typical of those that depict the Roman Empire, except for the overlaid, unidirectional arrow that suggests the possible bearing of the narrative. In all three maps, the space around the cursor is explored in greater detail, with places and place names appearing more frequently. Figures 18 and 19 make it clear through the use of shading to define the empire that this journey takes place beyond its borders, while Figure 21 uses the word 'Persian' (in 'Persian border' and 'Persian Desert') to distinguish this space from Roman space. The arrows and the place names that accompany them orientate the reader by laying down the historical movement of Julian's Persian campaign. More

[965] See Potter: 2013.
[966] For contemporary sources on the former, see Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, 8-10, and for the religious councils, see Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, especially 3.4-24.

importantly, they come to represent the campaign's historical momentum and wider significance as the reader nears the conclusion of each novel. With the arrows neatly ending in Persia (or the place

Figure 18: Map from 'Julian' (Vidal 1964)

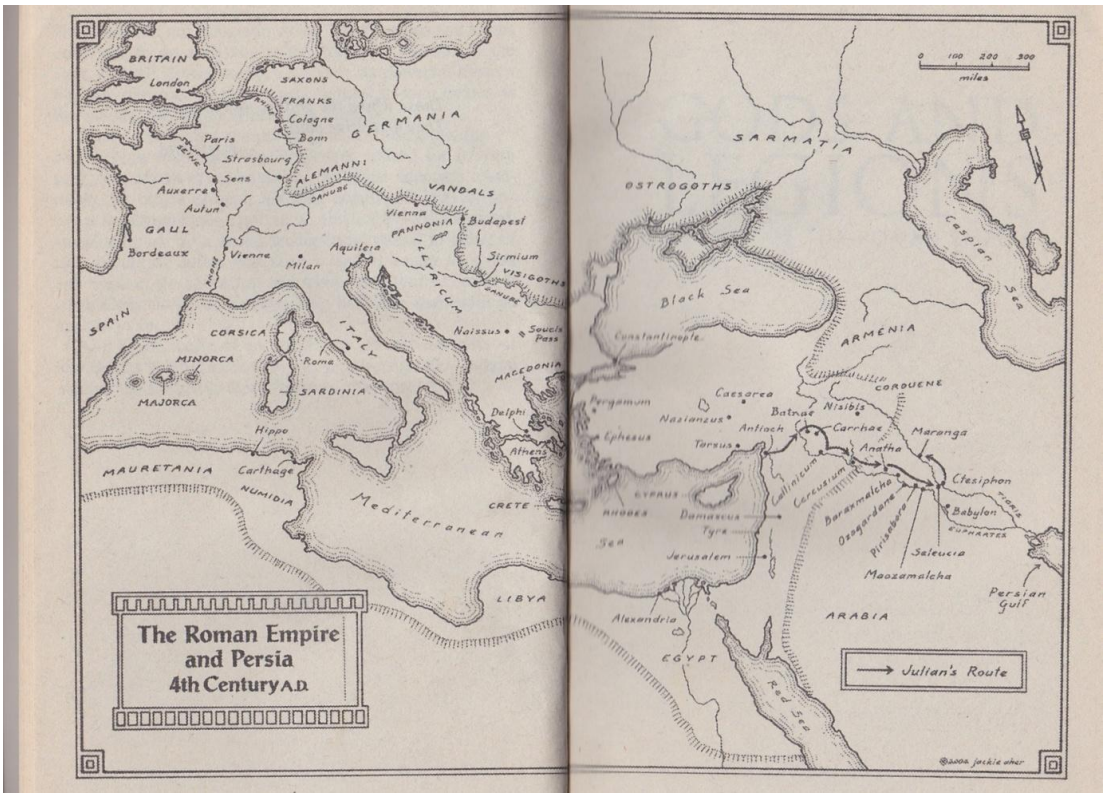

Figure 19: Map from 'Gods and Legions' (Ford 2002)

Figure 21: Map from the performance notes of 'Emperor and Galilean' (Ibsen 2011)

names in Figure 18), these maps highlight in advance the setting of the final act, but also come to represent the moment in time and space where Julian died. Julian's Persian campaign and death have been afforded significance by a number of historical traditions (Christian, 'pagan', and sceptical), since it led to both the loss of Roman territory in the East, and the loss of imperial support for the traditional religions of Rome.[967] What is interesting is how the arrows, which are exceptional to Julian's narrative across historical literature (the death of Constantine, for example, is not emplotted on the terrain of Figures 15-17), come to represent this.[968] The line depicting Julian's journey has precedent in that we know the route Julian took (Ammianus Marcellinus left a detailed account of Julian's reign, in particular of the Persian campaign), but the choice to emplot this on a map transforms a simple expedition from A-B into an ideologically charged comment on Julian's place in Western history. The arrows, as we will see, act much like detective fiction in that they require the reader "to reframe all that has gone before from the perspective of the end."[969]

While the arrows in Figures 18, 19, and 21 serve as an advance indication of the calamity that will befall Julian, leading to the triumph of Christianity over 'paganism', readers will most likely realise this retrospectively. For example, in Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean* (Figure 21), Julian learns

[967] For Christian interpretations, see Gregory of Nazianzen's two *Invectives Against Julian the Emperor*, and Jerome's *Chronicle*; for 'pagan' interpretations, see Amminaus Marcellinus' *The Later Roman Empire*, Libanius' *Oration 18*, and Zosimus' *New History*; for more on this, see also Ross: 2016, 21-22.
[968] Murdoch: 2003 contains a very similar map charting Julian's campaign.
[969] MacLachlan and Reid: 1994, 36.

that he will die on the 'Field of Mars'. The emperor takes this to mean that he will return successfully from Persia to live a long life, only reaching his end outside the walls of Rome (where the Field of Mars was located). However, at the end of the play, after sustaining a fatal wound from a former Christian companion in the Persia desert, Julian learns that Kadesia, the name of the desert, translates to 'The Field of Mars'.[970] Similarly, in Ford's *Gods and Legions* (Figure 19), the story opens *in medias res*, with Julian wounded in Persia. The narrative then backtracks, and only returns to the scene of his wound in the final chapter, where the reader learns that his Christian physician, Caesarius, rather than saving the emperor, guarantees that his wound is fatal. In Vidal's *Julian*, the situation is made clear by the termination of Julian's journal while on campaign in Persia. As Priscus notes in his commentary, "That is the last entry, broken off by sleep, and then by death."[971] The point I wish to make is that when the narrative encourages the reader to turn (or think) back to the map, the map itself, with its arrows, leads the reader away from the story's particular contents to a wider sense of historiographical destiny read back through the map's reality portal.

In all three works, Ibsen, Ford, and Vidal present the emperor as a tragically flawed hero, whose untimely death (at Christian hands) frustrates his realisation of an empire indebted to the cultural traditions of Rome, open to philosophy and the multiplicity of faith. The decision to focus on his death, in fiction and cartography, is revealing. The maps do not simply depict movement, but are concerned with predestination; they point to the fate of the Roman Empire and the Western world to come, particularly in terms of the trajectory of Christianity. As I explored elsewhere, Julian's death stands at an important historical crossroads. There is often, as in the final pages of Vidal's novel, an unspoken question of what would have happened had Julian survived.[972] The arrows that chart his fall thus become charged with additional resonance. If only we, like the pilots in Heller's *Catch-22*, could move the line on the map, then perhaps reality itself could bend. In Chapter 2, I explored how readers invest maps with degrees of reality over and above what they refer to, and so, while they cannot move the line, its very existence is memorialised as the defining feature of Julian's reign, pointing to the end of 'paganism' and the inescapable rise of Christianity, to an apparent and great loss of tradition. These maps visually connect Julian with Persia, and ultimately come to provide a shorthand that explains their relationship. Figures 18, 19 and 21 have the capacity to frame, but also to reframe the narrative, encouraging specific modes of remembrance.

[970] Ibsen: 2011, 156; Vidal: 511 narrates a very similar tale.
[971] Vidal: 1964, 506.
[972] See Vidal: 1964, 532; this is what Ford: 1983 realises through fantasy fiction.

§3 By the Same Author, Suggested Reading, Extracts

"Well, that's what happened to me up to the point that I reached the other continent, first at sea, then during the voyage among the islands and in the air, and after that in the whale, and, when we escaped from it, among the heroes and the dreams, and finally among the Bullheads and the Asslegs. What happened in that continent I'll tell you in the following books."[973]

– Lucian

The second century Greek satirist Lucian brings his most well-known parody to a close by promising the reader further instalments to his tale, encouraging them to read on and linger in his storyworld, to discover fresh delights. This is a concept familiar to modern readers who are routinely exposed, in the last few pages, to titles and extracts from other works in the author's oeuvre, invitations to buy books printed by the same publisher, or at the very least, suggestions for further reading.[974] The online marketplace has attempted to recreate this phenomenon, offering readers a selection of works similar to those perused or purchased: 'Customers who bought this also bought...', while streaming services echo the practice by establishing equivalence between the show just watched and those that might tie in through such connections as genre or critical acclaim. Lucian, however, was in fact ridiculing such expectations; his claim is as fantastical as his 'history'. There are no additional books to be found, and his promise remains unfounded. Lucian's manner of signing off engages with complex issues including readerly apprehension, fan service, and loyalty to an author's style and viewpoint, as well as ideas surrounding literary fulfilment, immersion in storytelling, and continuation in historical writing. What I want to look at are cases where the reader is presented with further material after the story and historical note, the majority of which directs their attention away from what they have just read and towards comparable works.

As we will see, there are three main connections established by extracts and suggested readings. The first relates to the ancient historical practice of 'continuation', where the opening pages of later histories explicitly picked up their narrative from the point at which earlier historical works had ended.[975] The second aspect that these paratextual devices evoke is comparability of historical theme, relating the events of the story just read to those that took place at another point in time. The third point of connection is comparability through historical approach. This gesture is usually implicated in the first two, with novelists demonstrating the potential of counterfactual, Christian, biographical, sceptical, or criminological approaches to historical reconstruction. I have divided my examples into groups based on those that provide extracts, those that list works by the

[973] Lucian, *A True History Book II*, 47.
[974] This has been the case since the serialisation of novels.
[975] See Wallace-Hadrill: 1986, 21-22 on how Ammianus Marcellinus' *History* emulated this trend by picking up the narrative from the end of Tacitus' *Annals*; other examples include Xenophon's *Hellenika*, which explicitly followed on from Thucydides' *History*, and Pliny the Elder's continuation of Aufidius Bassus's history.

same author, and those that offer suggested reading around the topic. We begin with Doherty's *Murder Imperial* and Ford's *Gods and Legions*, both of which contain extracts, before moving on to examine books within a series (Waters' *The Philosopher Prince* and Slaughter's *Constantine*). I then analyse lists of works by the same author (Vidal's Julian, Thubron's *Emperor*, and Ford's *The Dragon Waiting*), as well as suggestions for further reading (Ford's *Gods and Legions* and Baxter's *Emperor*). All these devices spur the reader to *do* something, namely, to read on. This can be as simple as turning the page or it can involve a more convoluted process; that of researching and buying a book to read in the future. I am less interested in this commercial aspect and more interested in how these paratexts creatively group representations of the past to generate a particular idea of history. These closing paratexts can be thought of as hyperlinks that invite readers to follow (and in the process strengthen) certain thematic and ideological approaches to reading the past.

The extracts at the end of Doherty's *Murder Imperial* and Ford's *Gods and Legions* consist of the first chapter of another work by the same author. In Doherty's case, the reader is given a pre-screening of his *House of Shadows*, set in England a thousand years after *Murder Imperial*, as identified by the protagonist, Brother Athelstan. If they remain in any doubt after reading the new title as to whether this novel will follow on thematically from *Murder Imperial*, then the first words of *House of Shadows* quickly dispel any uncertainty: "The hideous murders began on the Night of the Great Ratting."[976] The inclusion of an extract from *House of Shadows*, along with the publisher's invitation to "sample" another "mystery," brand Doherty as a writer of historical crime fiction.[977] The past, however, is not just an exotic backdrop to these novels. I have already explored how carefully Doherty establishes his knowledge of Roman history and literature in Chapter 2, Section 5, and how the blurb frames the importance of Constantine to fourth century religion and politics. The addition of the extract from *House of Shadows* expands Doherty's brand by turning attention to historical events in England in the fourteenth century CE. The two periods are placed side-by-side, with little care or concern for the gap between. Comparability of historical theme elides chronology in order to prioritise an unequivocal relationship between politically-motivated sedition in dissimilar ages; whodunit as masterplot for history. Murder and investigation are presented as timeless themes that bridge carefully constructed periods; universal human nature is reasserted, while the reader is also shown the radical differences between then and now, encouraged by the novel to become a historian-detective of multiple, distinctive eras of history. *House of Shadows* is positioned as a sequel to the mystery of *Murder Imperial*, reassuring readers who like Doherty's style that they can continue to consume periods of history via a form of deductive reasoning; that the past can be brought to life through inquiry and a tale complete with a high body-count. The inclusion of the

[976] Doherty: 2003, 299.
[977] Ibid., 298.

extract thus works to reinforce the comparability of Doherty's approach. The benefits of this historical view are substantiated by the extract, as well as by the reader, who moves with conviction between representations, embedding this approach by following the directives.

If a reader prefers their historical fiction to focus less on murder and more on events, especially with regard to military conquest, then those who enjoyed Ford's *Gods and Legions* are rewarded with an extract from *The Last King*. This novel is a prequel to *Gods and Legions* in that it explores the rise of Rome, rather than its 'fall' as encapsulated in the failed Persian campaign of Julian. The extract opens where *Gods and Legions* left off, in Persia, except the reader have travelled back in time to the reign of Mithridates of Pontus (the 'last king' identified by the title), famous for his resistance to Rome. There are further echoes of *Gods and Legions* in the extract, with *The Last King's* narrator claiming personal experience of events (just as Caesarius does), and falling back on his education ("I have studied Polybius' history of Rome...").[978] The stories thus appear to exist within the same continuum of historical representation. Continuity is forged between them, as if one historical fiction cannot end without tying itself into the larger genre and its coverage of history, particularly when that history appears to be a continuation of an earlier narrative. What we have here is an inversion of the trend in ancient historiography to pick up where another historian left off. Instead of opening *Gods and Legions* by paying homage to his earlier work, Ford's novel closes by returning the reader to an earlier point in time, retrospectively grouping *The Last King* with *Gods and Legions*. More than a footnote, and more than simply suggested reading, the extract from *The Last King* forms a hyperlink between fictional renditions of the past. By repeating the framing devices that helped sell *Gods and Legions* (title, preface, recommendation from the publishers to read on), the extract connects the type of history depicted in *Gods and Legions* to that of *The Last King*, and carves out a place for Ford in terms of historical branding. The reader is invited by this hyperlink to draw connections between the periods, to participate in a particular type of reconstruction, one interested in the depiction of ancient military geniuses and the effects of conquest.

The story may have finished, but there is more where that came from, claim Waters and Slaughter in *The Philosopher Prince* and *Constantine*. Both conclude their 'Author's Note' by stating that their novel is part of a series. In Waters' case, "The novel follows on from my earlier story, *Cast Not the Day*."[979] This novel is also set in the fourth century CE, and charts the early years of the same fictional protagonists that feature in *The Philosopher Prince*, exploring their upbringing in Roman Britain as Christianity and civil war throw the island into chaos. Water's announcement at the close of *The Philosopher Prince* charts a direct continuity between the two novels. Rather than using historical theme and approach to conceal temporal displacement, this paratextual gesture situates

[978] Ford: 2002, 459.
[979] Waters: 2011, 374.

The Philosopher Prince as a means of exploring what happened next, both in terms of the lives of the protagonists, but also the history of the fourth century. Waters' closing paratext hyperlinks the series as part of the same thread of history, allowing comparisons both backwards and between the two novels and their reconstruction of the past. It also enables a sense of trajectory, a movement towards an end-point, which serves to highlight Waters' thematic appropriation of the fourth century. His attention to detail in reconstructing the fourth century, laudation of aristocratic pagan virtues juxtaposed with unquestioning Christian piety, and attempts to queer the record is drawn out in both novels by the hyperlink, which acts to group them and their subject into a coherent whole with an overarching direction. This leads from social and religious injustice at the hands of Christian emperors, to due process, recompense, and liberalism under the 'pagan' emperor Julian, whose reign can then be seen as exemplary, a 'golden age' in comparison to what came before. The prequel (*Cast Not the Day*), it is implied, provides a historical perspective on *The Philosopher Prince* and its depiction of Julian. Waters' claim in his 'Author's Note' allows for the reader to delve deeper, not just into the storyworld, but into its inception, a specific version of the past complete with politically sensitive themes.[980] *Cast Not the Day* is offered as a counterpart, different enough to warrant a reading, but similar enough for the reader to know what they will receive, including why its events matter on a grander scale. Waters' claim is self-serving and thus diverges from those ancient historians who claimed to complete other famous inquiries. It also comparable, however, in that it draws parallels and appears to 'finish' an existing narrative.

The Philosopher Prince sells equivalent renditions of the past within its own pages. By following such messages, readers strengthen the connections they forge. This effect is even more apparent in Slaughter's *Constantine: The Miracle of the Flaming Cross*, "the first in a series of dramatized biographies of major figures in the history of religion, to be published from time to time under the general title of *The Pathway of Faith*."[981] By connecting his novel to those yet unpublished, Slaughter makes it possible for readers to perceive a sweeping 'history of the Church' (in the style of the Church fathers). Constantine is martyred on the page, the sincerity of his personal faith assured in order to stage one of the major "crises in the story of [the Christian] faith."[982] Constantine's powerful place in history authorises Slaughter's broadly Christian message, which glosses over the complexity of sectarian disputes and heresies in favour of a historical pattern that makes sense of a religion that "has steadily continued to grow and spread across the face of the earth."[983] Slaughter's

[980] Bhadury: 2013, 316.
[981] Slaughter: 1965, 430.
[982] Ibid.
[983] Slaughter: 1965, 430.

aim is to educate through inspiration, and his comments reframe *Constantine*, authorising a comparable Christian approach that connects the reader to the fourth century.

Pages entitled 'By the Same Author' construct an ordered and coherent body of work for the author of the story. In Vidal's case, the list appears just after the author summary at the start of *Julian* and helps to emphasise his credentials as a writer interested in teasing out the nature of – or indeed satirising – antiquity (cf. *Julian*, *Creation*, and *Romulus*), the process of historical representation (*Screening History*), and organised religion in the form of Christianity (*Messiah* and *Live from Golgotha*). Vidal's works are clearly divided between his wide-ranging outputs, from novels and essays to memoirs and work for the theatre. The page serves as a reminder of Vidal's status in the literary community before a reading of *Julian*. After a reading, it becomes a menu for further 'Vidalian' insights into other aspects of human history and culture (cf. *Lincoln*, *An Evening with Richard Nixon*, and *Hollywood*), framed by a reader's sense of history according to *Julian*. This is encapsulated by Libanius in a letter to himself in the epilogue: "The world Julian wanted to preserve and restore is gone ... but I shall not write 'forever,' for who can know the future? Meanwhile, the barbarians are at the gate. Yet when they breach the wall, they will find nothing of value to seize, only empty relics. The spirit of what we were has fled."[984] Libanius' evocation of 'barbarians' can be read as both a reference to Christianity (understood as an uncultured tribe that will, from now on, encounter little resistance from 'paganism'), and to the 'barbarians' beyond the frontier, who, when they enter Rome, will find only remains, its culture lost to Christianity. This is representative of a broader history of decline following the 'triumph' of Christianity, made famous by Gibbon, though one tempered by a futuristic gaze (perhaps all has not been lost). The futuristic gaze also functions to highlight an oblique comment on Vidal's present, on future societies (America) tied culturally to Rome, especially how their appearance may conceal systemic decay. It is easy to see how, after incorporating Vidal's vision of Julian – and Julian's times – into the historical imagination, readers might anticipate that his other works will deal similarly with history, politics, and religion – and they would not be wrong to do so. From pre-framing the text and exhibiting Vidal's 'author function', the full-page oeuvre goes on to stabilise 'Vidal' as a particular brand of historical reconstruction interested in exploring (through scepticism, satire, and criticism) major events in Western history. The list of works encourages "loyalty and engagement" with this brand beyond *Julian*, which not only broadens the scope and applicability of the ideas contained within *Julian*, but also helps to secure it amongst other cultural icons.[985]

The 'also by' pages in Thubron's *Emperor* and Ford's *The Dragon Waiting* perform much the same task, except they appear at the end like a list of credits, highlighting what other work went into

[984] Vidal: 1964, 532.
[985] Catherine Johnson quoted in Doherty: 2014, 14.

– or took place after – the writing of these works. Once again, they help to determine overlaps between the work just read and the worlds evoked in other novels. Ford is reasserted as an author of speculative fiction (*Web of Angles*, *Growing Up Weightless*), meaning that his brand of alternative history, which demonstrates the malleability of history by having Julian survive Persia, charts a comparability of approach in thinking about history and the world at large. This work, as in *Julian*, is presented as a list of titles. In Thubron's *Emperor*, the list of titles is accompanied by notes. The notes flesh out further biographical details; Thubron is presented as a travel writer, known for making extensive solitary journeys across some of the most war-torn and/or remote parts of the world in order to discover the people and history of an area. Thubron is presented as a modern-day ethnographer, praised for his 'enquiry' (*histoirē*), a model established by the oldest of travel writers (Herodotus) and historians (Thucydides). Thubron is also reviewed positively for his skill evoking the inner, troubled life of characters in his novel *A Cruel Madness*.[986] These details complement the novel just read, a piece of epistolary travel writing that explores the interior life of Constantine and his wife, Fausta, before Constantine's 'conversion'. Pages that contain lists of works by the same author, while encouraging readers to go and read such titles, also, then, demonstrate the scope of a historical approach. These paratexts becomes a unifying gesture that hyperlink different genres, periods, and approaches, and allow for the historical ideas contained within the novel to be transcribed across boundaries, creating a coherent sense of what different collections of historical representations mean. We see this at work in Brand's *In This Sign Conquer*. Here, the reader is offered recommendations for novels by Paul Maier (*Pontius Pilate* and *The Flames of Rome*), both of which explicitly pay homage to the Christian themes of Brand's work, and are accompanied by a heavy Christianising frame (Maier is heralded as a professor of Ancient History, and the novels are positively reviewed by *The Christian Herald*).[987] The hyperlink effect takes the reader from one historical reconstruction to the next at the turn of a page, with one novel acting as a summary framework for the next. The link, in the form of a title, extract, or blurb, creates a reference point to further information about the past contained in additional source material, often with the same themes and approach. It does not have to be followed for it to signal the connection, but, like the primary narrative thread in Herodotus' *Histories*, acts as anchor for other stories to coalesce around.[988] Historical fictions thus index each other as prequels and sequels, and reach outwards in an attempt to show the interconnectivity between select representations of the past.

[986] Thubron: 2002, 177-178.
[987] Brand: 1996, 302-303.
[988] This, as Dewald: 1998 xii suggests, is the narrative of the Persian kings, and their interaction with the Greeks; alongside and as well as this narrative, we have digressions on all manner of creatures and stories.

So far, we have looked at further reading in terms of historical novels endorsing other historical novels. I wish to bring this discussion to a close by looking at historical novels that steer readers towards academic surveys of history. In the 'Afterword' to *Emperor*, Baxter, rather than noting where he deviated from history or providing information beyond the end of the narrative, takes time to list the secondary sources he found useful in reconstructing the Roman occupation of Britain, from Caesar to Constantine. This is not a static bibliography, like the one in Vidal's *Julian*.[989] As Baxter notes, "our understanding of Britannia is changing all the time."[990] His selection of sources is therefore less an authorising mechanism – though it also performs this function – and more a suggestion for the reader to engage in the same type of historiographical research, to be a companion in the act of reconstruction.[991] "See for instance Alan Bowman's *Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier*."[992] *Emperor* is framed as an introduction to the topic, a concept that is indebted to the paratexts of Walter Scott's historical novels. In the preface to *Peveril of the Peak*, Scott said "the love of knowledge wants but a beginning."[993] Scott anticipated that his works should "send the reader back to the history books," and Baxter reiterates this, assuring 'anxious' readers of the historicity of the representation (what can be taken as historical truth), while also mediating historical fiction as an introductory trailer for longer, more critical explorations of the period.[994] As Stevens notes, "historical novelists direct their readers beyond their pages to works of history ... for the 'precious ore' of factual material" so as to be associated with narrative history.[995] In the process, Baxter frames the accounts and events they explore, both by implicit reference to his own story, and by accompanying commentary, which impacts the reader's idea of them.[996]

Baxter offers Ken Dar's *Britain and the End of the Roman Empire* and Neil Faulkner's *The Decline and Fall of Roman Britain* as "new interpretations of Britannia's fall."[997] Since the contents of Baxter's novel represents an infatuation with early Roman imperialism combined with nostalgia (for both pre-Roman Britain and early Roman Britain, which the novel looks back on during the age of Constantine), it is clearly indebted to ideas of decline and fall. The works that Baxter refers readers to, which draw on Gibbon's famous title, demonstrate the wider historical clout behind the narrative of decline and fall. Baxter's paratextual gesture hyperlinks his story to a particular historical approach, which the reader then sustains in their historical imagination as a collective vision of the

[989] Vidal: 1964, x; see also Chapter 2, Section 6 for a discussion of this bibliography.
[990] Baxter: 2007, 301.
[991] Ibid.
[992] Ibid.
[993] Scott quoted in Kerr: 1989, 15.
[994] Roberts and Thomson: 1991, 1.
[995] Stevens: 2013, 26.
[996] Commentary on sources has been a common facet of historiography since Herodotus.
[997] Baxter: 2007, 301.

past. At the same time, the comparability of history approach could be said to work both ways. If Dar and Faulkner's works can be said to frame Baxter's novel, then it is not unbelievable to suggest that the same happens in reverse. Comparability entails similarity, of having something in common. Baxter's hyperlink shows how narrative histories can be collected together with historical novels, the implication being that these works might explore the past in a comparable manner.

Baxter further proposes, when talking about Hadrian's Wall, that "there is no substitute for visiting these wonderful places."[998] He thus ties his idea of history and the historian's role back to the practice of ancient historical writers, who emphasised cross-examination of witnesses and lived experience.[999] In *Gods and Legions*, Ford goes a step further than this, reaching beyond suggested reading/exploits. Besides the extract from *The Last King* and sources on Roman daily life, Ford notes that "Those interested in classical literature will find many references in this book ... particularly to Virgil's *Aeneid*."[1000] Ford highlights the intertextuality of the novel, while also hyperlinking *Gods and Legions* to the world as it was evoked and understood in epic poetry. Both Baxter and Ford, in their 'Afterwords', assert that routes to the past, to the beliefs and lives of our ancestors, are multifaceted – there is no single path (a claim at odds with the past-present of the story), but the paths readers tread are joined in more ways than they know.[1001] These paratexts show historical representations in fiction to be ultimately open-ended, leaving space for comparable retellings.[1002]

What we see in the above paratexts is a concerted effort to reconnect with different 'canons' of history, whether thought of in terms of primary sources, secondary scholarship, or collections of historical fictions. These novels require that readers read them in relation to such 'canons' to fully appreciate the complexity and advantages of the genre.

[998] Baxter: 2007, 302.
[999] See, for example, Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.1 and 1.21-1.22.
[1000] Ford: 2002, 450.
[1001] As Eco: 1980, 549 wrote, "books always speak of other books," a theme he made apparent in his own historical novel, *The Name of the Rose*, which he prefaced with the epigraph: "Naturally, a manuscript."
[1002] Abbott: 2008, 57; see also Bhadury: 2013, 322.

§4 Titles

"There's an old song
my grandfather used to sing
that has the question,
'Or would you rather be a fish?'

In the same song
is the same question
but with a mule and a pig,
but the one I hear sometimes
in my head is the fish one.
Just that one line.
Would you rather be a fish?
As if the rest of the song
didn't have to be there."[1003]
– *Patterson*

The primary thread running through this thesis is how the historical frame, made manifest by paratexts, signals ways to understand the past. This takes place on a number of levels. To begin with, the framing narratives of paratexts transmit specific historical content and concepts that help to precondition the Roman contents of a novel, providing the groundwork to comprehend representations of the past. The reader negotiates this more public side of the historical frame before and during a reading. Then there is the lasting legacy left by the reader's exit strategy that conditions the reception of the novel's contents in the historical imagination, along with its telling. I have also touched on how, over the course of a reading, paratexts frame but also *reframe* an experience of the past. Nowhere is this anterior/posterior effect of paratexts more apparent than with titles, and so it is to these devices that we return, to their valedictory gesture.

Scholarship on framings has focused predominantly on "*entryway paratexts*," reserving an occasional glance for those that interrupt the narrative *in medias res*.[1004] As with historical notes, closing-framings have mostly been overlooked due to a general assumption that they can only exert a limited effect on the reader who has already internalised the story. The focus has traditionally been on how the story *will* be received, rather than how it *might* be remembered. There is a simple reason for this: paratexts are difficult to talk about without recourse to the material book and its historical messages, especially at the end of the reading process, as the reader moves from the story into the imaginative, unbounded space of culture and its reception.

A title functions as the beginning of the book, as we saw in Chapter 2. We also saw how it appears as a running word or phrase that acquires or shifts meaning as the story develops, helping to confirm or redirect ideas brought to the story by the reader. What I want to consider here is the

[1003] 'The Line' quoted in *Patterson*, Jarmusch: 2016.
[1004] Gray: 2010, 35 and Fathallah: 2015, 75.

role the title plays as the last word the reader sees, conspicuous on the front and back covers as well as on the spine, when the book is closed.[1005] Titles become, after a reading, anchor points for a specific novel. When that novel happens to be a historical novel, possessing the capacity to shape the historical imagination, then that title recalls for the reader a heterogeneous, frequently romanticised, and often conservative past that is both polarising in its ideological stance towards figures and events, and ultimately fulfilling (at least in narrative terms).[1006] While the "goal" of the story is to "explain the title," it is equally productive to consider the reverse; how the story, in discharging this function, bestows on the title explanatory powers that make the story comprehensible.[1007] If that story is a representation of the past, titles are resituated as islands of sense that delimit the history of a period. Their exit-way function is mnemonic, helping readers to remember and piece together aspects of history though circumscribed keywords.

Titles hold the most privileged position of any paratext because they not only function as entryway and exit-way, but also re-entryway to the story and its depiction of antiquity. Waugh's *Helena*, Slaughter's *Constantine: The Miracle of the Flaming Cross*, and Vidal's *Julian* make 'great' historical figures the way into antiquity. These titles are enigmas that require deciphering, Adorno's "aporia of literature."[1008] They highlight gaps in knowledge and instil within the reader a desire to inquire into the lives of these figures.[1009] Each title prefigures what the reader will see in the story, and is in turn transformed by the story and its evocation of history.[1010] As Derrida said, "the text bears its title and bears upon it."[1011] Thus the Helena that Waugh acquaints the reader with becomes a model for rational believers: "Her commitment to finding concrete evidence of the Christian story is presented as specifically 'English empiricism'" – she discovers the Cross "precisely because her British nationality provides her with the appropriate temperament and circumstances to do so."[1012] Slaughter similarly offers up a biography of Constantine as an example for Christian audiences to draw inspiration from, while Vidal makes use of Julian's story as a vehicle for a staunch critique of monotheism and a lamentation for the Christian world to come. As these names undergo contextualisation by the story and its paratexts, readers are assured of the validity of character-based approaches to the study and reconstruction of the past, of their instructive use, as in the ancient historiographical tradition, for the present. On exiting the book, readers combine this

[1005] Smith and Wilson: 2011, 6.
[1006] See Groot: 2016, 156 and Groot: 2010, 121.
[1007] Genette: 1997, 67; see also Maguire: 2016, who quotes Krzhizhanovskii stating that "The book is the title unrolled as far as it will go, the title is the book restricted to an extent of two or three words."
[1008] Barthes: 1990, 75; Adorno: 1992, 4.
[1009] See Allen: 2016, 223-224, Levin: 1977, xxiv, and Hollander: 1975, 212-213.
[1010] I am indebted here to Calvino: 2016, 147.
[1011] Derrida: 1992, 212.
[1012] Harbus: 2002, 136-138.

knowledge with what they have gained from the story and its depiction of a life, complete with associated historical events. They are able to apply a retrospective analysis of the title and appreciate its full historical meaning.[1013] In our examples, each title becomes loaded with ideas of history encompassing everything from narratives of Christian triumph and the role of Biblical revelation as turning points, to nostalgia for Rome's pagan past and an obsession with the nucleus of the Roman state, especially the machinations of history's most powerful autocrats. The first time a reader finishes a book, the title encapsulates their newly acquired knowledge, and both the book and the historical figure alluded to are awarded cultural standing. By finishing the book, the reader is able to "gain possession of" the historical figure and their story; readers do not 'leave' the book, but "conquer it."[1014] The title becomes a memorial to this event, able to remind the reader of a specific representation. As we have seen, historical fictions set in Rome carry reciprocal titles. This means that together they streamline re-entry to a particular imaginative conception of the past. The onomastic titles cited above help readers flashback to each individual novel, but also enable a return to a defined space, an action that allows the reader to capture once again a certain historical sensibility of Rome, deepening their possession of it.

The space that titles inhabit, both on the page and in the imagination, can help us move beyond the idea of historical fiction as a paradox that constantly undermines itself, gesturing "towards something that does not and cannot exist."[1015] Instead, titles encourage us to think of paratexts creating a "mutually-constituting shared space" between ideas of history and the affordances of fiction.[1016] Titles group historical concepts with knowledge of key figures and events, encouraging readers to look through an invented lens at a cluster of verifiable pasts; they are a site where multiple, contradictory narratives can "'subsist' in the same place."[1017] As Barthes has argued, "words have a second-order memory which mysteriously persists in the midst of new meanings."[1018] Titles, being keywords, create a first-order memory of the past, but they also contribute to, and contain, second-order memories drawn from extratextual experience. I noted in Chapter 2 how authors use prefaces to contest the second-order memory of titles/names in a way that is reminiscent of fanfic authors "wrestl[ing] control away from canon authors."[1019] Vidal disavows apocryphal stories of Julian in order to lay the groundwork for his own interpretation, which then becomes a further way of conceiving the emperor. Titles that allude in some way to history become bound up with issues of reception, as one version of a figure or event is put forward as the most

[1013] Rubik: 2006, 343.
[1014] Bunia: 2006, 359.
[1015] Groot: 2016, 182-183.
[1016] Wake: 2016, 94.
[1017] Certeau: 1988, 312; see also Groot: 2016, 80.
[1018] Barthes quoted in Maiorino: 2008, 143.
[1019] Leavenworth: 2015, 43.

accurate, interesting, or relevant for contemporary society. From such titles, we can begin to trace the journey of classical figures and ideas, dividing historical fictions into groupings (as I have done in the preceding chapters between 'Christian' novels and those on Julian) that appeal to the past in similar ways. The recurring use of names, meanwhile, and especially epithets such as *Emperor*, show that historical novelists are perfectly happy to rely on repetition so as to "have more of the same story," an implicit rejection of the nuances of history in favour of literary tropes that trailerise the past, focusing the reader's attention on reduced, though highly stylised, images of antiquity.[1020] These images sell Rome as a broadly military and/or political/religious world, while also enticing readers in-the-know by name-dropping and alluding to specific events. The influence this can have on the historical imagination is monumental, not only because the images are informed by antiquity (and are then re-presented as its key characteristic), but because titles activate feedback loops between reader, novel, and future encounters.

Genette proclaimed at the end of *Paratexts* that "The paratext is only an assistant, only an accessory of the text," and that as a threshold it "exists to be crossed."[1021] He warned against replacing the text with the paratext, or concluding that "'all is paratext.'"[1022] Scholars have since challenged this assumption, not on the grounds that all *is* paratext or that the text is less important, but rather by exploring the complex relationship between reader, text, and paratext, along with the outcome of this dialogue on the dissemination of meaning. In a recent study of paratexts across media, Gray argued that "between the outward overflow and inward convergence of paratextuality ... we see the beating heart of the text."[1023] "Paratexts," he suggested, "are always constitutive parts of the text itself," an idea echoed by Smith and Wilson in *Renaissance Paratexts*, where they proposed that "paratextual elements are in operation all the way through the reader's experience of the text."[1024] This should not be understood as an elimination of the category of the paratext, an inability to distinguish between devices such as titles and the story. Rather, it implores us to consider how paratexts continually frame and reframe the reader's ongoing experience of the text. What this means, and what my thesis emphatically demonstrates, is that paratexts continually impact encounters with the past, both before, during, and after a reading.[1025] In addition, Gray explored how "talk of and reaction to a text may ... originate with the paratext" but how over time this is "integrated into [the reader's] conception of 'the text itself.'"[1026] My thesis has attempted to explore this in practice, and, by using historical novels as a case study, to ask what a 'paratextual reading' of

[1020] Leavenworth: 2015, 43.
[1021] Genette: 1997, 410.
[1022] Ibid., 407.
[1023] Gray: 2010, 41.
[1024] Ibid., 35; Smith and Wilson: 2011, 6.
[1025] Ibid., 2-3.
[1026] Ibid., 46.

the genre can tell us about its effects on the historical imagination. As Wolf notes, "our first – as well as last – contact is hardly ever with the main text as such but with something that prestructures and influences our response to it."[1027] It is not the story that readers 'see' when they close the book or read its spine. The privileging of the story in discussions of the genre ignores the lingering presence of its historically-framed title in the mind, a word that, contrary to the story, "seeks unity, clarity, even monopoly of thought and enunciation."[1028]

The epigraph to this section, a poem called 'The Line' from the film *Patterson*, explores how just one line of a song can metonymically stand in for the rest of the song. Titles are used in this way to identify individual novels. However, when they demarcate a piece of historical fiction, they function in much the same way regarding historical periods, which are then identified by "mythical themes, master plots, and modes of expression that are both cumulative and recurrent."[1029] Imperial motifs are a good example of this (*Murder Imperial, Emperor*), as are appeals to the gods and classical ideals (*Gods and Legions, The Philosopher Prince*). Titles are the "epigraph and epitaph" to an encounter with the past in historical fiction; introducing, and then finally laying to rest the achievements and importance of certain figures, passing them on in perpetuity.[1030] They have become both "palimpsest and panopticon," establishing a point from which we can see the multifarious nature of historical representations, what contradictory ideas go into their makeup, while also demonstrating that each new appellation that becomes a title, a signifier of the past, attempts to write over what has gone before so as to provide a 'monopoly of thought'.[1031] Titles become, as Levin wrote, "cultural signposts," encouraging readers to rely on their directions as "signals for our guidance through surroundings otherwise dark, notices that we depend upon to alert ourselves to the plenitude and variety and quality of the communications that we may choose to receive."[1032] When it comes to historical fiction, they help navigate the distance between then and now, through affective signals and overtures to historical themes that remain popular precisely because they evoke emotional responses from readers (warfare, political intrigue, absolute power). In designating individual novels in a genre that prides itself on creating an affective relationship with the past, titles further encourage readers to remember their experience of the past in historical fiction as an affective one, where they were moved by past figures and events.[1033]

Each time a piece of historical fiction is consumed, its title becomes a means of imagining the past. With the amount of historical fiction on offer, readers are continually contributing to the

[1027] Wolf: 1999, 122.
[1028] Spiridon: 2010, 57; see also Derrida: 1992, 188-189 and Bradley: 2014, 288.
[1029] Maiorino: 2008, 220.
[1030] Ibid., 307, 300-301, and 222-223.
[1031] Ibid.; see also Levin: 1977, xxxv.
[1032] Levin: 1977, xxxv.
[1033] Littau: 2006, 67.

vast array of signs that point to the imaginative gateways of a historically authenticated Rome. This accumulation of signs, along with the stories they carry with them, has populated the historical imagination with a rich array of Roman-themed artefacts and the necessary historical ideas to interpret them. In this instance, titles are like the emblems that Marco Polo presents to Kublai Khan in Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, representing the places he had been in the Mongol Empire. Even when Polo learns to speak the Tartar language, Calvino notes that "each piece of information about a place recalled to the emperor's mind that first gesture or object with which Marco had designated the place. The new fact received a meaning from that emblem and also added to the emblem a new meaning."[1034] And it is not just the titles of individual novels that work in this way, but the subtitle appended to all works of the genre: historical fiction.[1035] At the same time as framing the reader's encounter with the past, historical novels frame an encounter with historical fiction, developing a sense of the external frame that separates works of the genre from general fiction, of the reading strategies required to interpret the ideas of history presented by the paratexts and storys of historical novels, of the procedures involved in reading historical fiction.

[1034] Calvino: 1997, 19.
[1035] Hollander: 1975, 213-214.

§5 Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the theoretical underpinnings, construction, and workings of the historical frame in order to demonstrate how it embeds not only the specialised historical content of (late) antiquity in the historical imagination, but also various conceptual ways to understand this. For the purpose of analysis, I partitioned the historical frame according to five interrelated aspects, namely the material, spatial, cultural, cognitive, and imaginative, and further divided these in line with the experience of reading historical fiction. In Chapter 2, we looked at how the first three aspects shape what I call the public-facing side of the historical frame. We considered how reading fiction can be framed historically, and how the interface between the public- and non-public-facing sides of the historical frame triangulates the reception of antiquity by connecting the reader to the past and its representation. The focus was on the communication this opens up between work and reader, including the latter's cognitive negotiation and imaginative reconciliation of the frame with the work's contents. In Chapter 3, we moved to consider closing frames and the reader's withdrawal from the story, thinking more in terms of the impact of the non-public-facing side of the historical frame. Here we discovered how the proximity of the story and the framing narratives that follow allows for the possibility of frame-breaking, creating a seemingly direct means to 'converse' with antiquity, one that is reinforced by the reader's exit strategy. Both sides of the historical frame, I argued, are in a dialogical relationship at the micro level of paratexts and the macro level of genre, history, and classical reception. This dialogue takes place within the framing narratives of paratexts before, during, and after a reading, and continually informs (and is also informed by) the story and the reader's prior knowledge. The dialogue looks to the past, reframing historical figures, events, and narratives, as well as the future, anticipating further engagements that develop and challenge the reader's experience of history. Such a dialogue becomes part of the historical imagination, defining both the end and starting point of new historical experiences.

While it is important to analyse the representation of Rome in modern media, this thesis demonstrates that such representations are already embedded in complex, composite framing processes. These processes determine how representations arise, how they are encoded in different periods, as well as how they are materially produced, presented, authorised, negotiated, contextualised, conceptualised, and received. In addition to this, and contrary to traditional approaches to paratextual study, this thesis shows how the framing narratives of paratexts in historical fiction mediate their own intertextual and historicising scripts that offer different knowledges of the past, while also increasing the capacity of the historical imagination to include alternative, unknown, or unknowable historical possibilities. The historical frame thus transcends story-orientated and marketing functions to influence, intentionally or otherwise, the historical

imagination, often through self-reference (prefaces), the invention of tradition (covers and titles), repetition (maps and blurbs), and/or homage to conventions (notes). These processes establish equivalence between the framing of a wide variety of historical materials. The 'validity' of historical contents may differ, but all share the same framing ethos. I have investigated how this ethos manifests itself in works framed as fiction. As this thesis has shown, there is something deeper at work in the genre of historical fiction than a superficial borrowing of paratexts from the discipline of History. By reflecting on the longevity of framing practices around historical representations, it is possible to take a more nuanced stance to the apparent contradictions raised by the compound 'historical fiction'. Rather than defining the genre as an oxymoron, tautology, hybrid or unfathomable mystery as previous scholars have done, I use the concept of the historical frame, not to divide the historical from the fictional frame or to argue they are selfsame, but to think about the signals that map a fluid terrain of overlapping discourses, traditions, and gestures. These signals are managed, not just paratextually, but also spatially, culturally, cognitively, and imaginatively, and are part of an ongoing transaction around works of historical writing, theory, and fiction.

The focus here has been on how the theory of framing can revise and extend a study of the paratexts of historical fiction, and vice versa, how a study of historical fiction can model the five aspects of the historical frame and develop our understanding of the functions of paratexts in historical writing. This, combined with theories of reading focused on a hypothetical reader and a dialogical approach to classical reception, has resulted in a series of fresh insights into the genre and its impact on popular historical impressions. These include a shift towards the imaginative over the purely interpretative when it comes to framing narratives, a drive towards understanding the role of the reader, not just as an ideal or story-focused entity, but as an intuitive paratextual agent, and finally a rigorous focus in terms of how authors and publishers translate the otherness of ancient history within a wide range of book-related paratexts. My approach shows that any attempt to isolate the story from the framing devices of historical fictions will necessarily fall short in terms of describing the reading experience of the genre and the adoption of historical sensibilities within popular fiction. In applying a classical reception angle to the historical frame, this thesis further challenges scholars of historical fiction to consider the dialogical effect of the reception of historical content and concepts within the frame, to rethink assumptions about the genre and its reception that stem from a privileging of the story and associated issues of accuracy, deceptiveness, or presentism. As we saw with my case study, the reception that takes place within the historical frame is a powerful example of the way in which certain strands of late antiquity's polarised historiography is used to introduce, interrupt, and conclude a retelling of the lives and events that gave rise to such history. In offering their own narratives and 'reviews' of this legacy and the story that follows, the

paratexts and framing devices of historical fictions ask the reception scholar to radically rethink where the dialogue with antiquity begins and ends, and what can be gained by looking beyond representations at the process of the historical frame and the procedures of reading.

As noted in the Introduction, this thesis is the first study of the historical frame. In breaking new ground, it has also opened up avenues for future exploration, including how the historical frame in fiction has developed as a meta-phenomenon across transmedial platforms (e-books, TV, film, game, virtual reality), how it functions in historical materials that downplay fiction (re-enactment, documentaries, non-fiction), how it has evolved in different periods and cultures, and finally how an empirical analysis of its non-public-facing side at different historical moments might complement the conclusions drawn here. The latter may enable the critic not only to realise how audiences are encouraged to think about history, and to theorise the effects of this, but also to demonstrate the way that they act on this as a result. Together, these approaches will transform the way we think about historical encounters, taking into account their holistic impact across culture.

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